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*And Various Burlesques, Epigrams, Poems, Short Satires, Etc.*

Manuscripts must be addressed, "Editors of THE SMART SET"

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Eltinge F. Warner, President and Treasurer

George Jean Nathan, Secretary

Western Advertising Office, Wrigley Building, Chicago, Ill.

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*The*  
**SMART SET**  
*The*  
*Aristocrat*  
*Among*  
*Magazines*



## The Proof

By Manuel Dregant

**T**HE Rev. Gideon Hicks viewed his congregation with satisfaction. The importance of the sermon that he was to deliver had filled the pews of his church.

The Rev. Mr. Hicks was a large man; his chest and shoulders were broad and massive, supporting an elongated, somewhat conical head on a thick neck. His arms were surprisingly long in proportion to his short, thick-set legs, and his hairy hand almost completely hid the Bible that lay on the pulpit. He had a low brow; his head was covered with dark-brown, short, erect hair, and his cheeks and chin with a stubby beard. He had a flat nose with dilated nostrils; the mouth was wide, the lips rather thick. His ears and eyes were small; the latter, beneath heavy eyebrows, gazed steadily at his parishioners.

"Brothers and sisters," he began, "I suppose that nearly all of you know that the title of to-day's sermon is, 'In His Image: the Proof of the Falsity of Evolution' . . ."



# The Free Life

By *T. F. Mitchell*

**S**HE worked nine hours a day, six days a week, wrapping soap. She had to get up at six because it took an hour to get to the factory. She did not get home 'til after seven at night. Supper over, she was too tired to go anywhere. Usually she read the evening paper for a while and then sat on the rear porch and watched the boats on the river. On Sunday morning, glad of the chance, she did not get up till near dinner time. After dinner, sometimes she

went for a walk with a girl friend, and on rare occasions she took a trip to an amusement resort, which meant a hot ride in a crowded trolley car. She never went to the movies because they hurt her eyes.

One day she read about cloistered nuns, who lived behind high walls and never saw the world.

"My God," she said to her mother. "I don't see how anyone can give up life like that!"



## Song

By *George Sterling*

**I** WAS a sea-god's daughter,  
Born where the dolphin run.  
I stared from crimson coral  
Up to a moonlike sun.

I was a dryad's daughter.  
Singing an elfin rune,  
I gazed, beside my birth-tree,  
Up to a star-led moon.

I was a witch's daughter,  
With eyes like agate-spar.  
I watched, before her grotto,  
The silver-wanded star.

I am a cobbler's daughter,  
Tired ere my toil is done.  
I look through broken windows  
On star and moon and sun.



# Exhibit A

[A Novelette]

By *Harold H. Armstrong*

(*Henry G. Aikman*)

(Author of "Zell," and "For Richer, For Poorer")

I

**W**HAT reminded me of Crusoe was a paragraph in a fifteen-cent magazine.

The paragraph was part of an interview with a certain popular authoress—a lady whose name is as well known as the President's, and whose income from magazine editors, book publishers, theatrical managers and movie producers must amount to a hundred thousand a year, easily.

This enviable priestess of art was unbosoming herself of advice to young writers; and in the paragraph that caught my attention, she was quoted as follows:

If you feel the God-given urge to write, or to become an artist of any kind, don't hesitate, don't be half-hearted, but plunge in! Give up everything else in the world, and follow your own particular Gleam! Quit your job, whether or no there are people dependent on you—and WRITE! PAINT! SING! PLAY YOUR FIDDLE!—or whatever else it is your soul yearns to do. Have enough faith—and somehow you and your family will be fed and clothed. Comes a blessed moment when you realize you have WON!

Gallant and noble words! Only I happened to be acquainted with this gifted lady's folks in Cleveland, and I knew the facts in her case: how for seven long years, while she was slowly achieving her present dazzling success, she submitted without recorded protest to the indignity of being supported by her father. As the saying goes, she draped herself about her family's neck—hung on for dear life. But then, I

suppose, she'd call that having "enough faith"!

At any rate, the paragraph made me think of Ralph Crusoe. I wondered what he'd say to it, and I had an instant's impulse to cut it out and send it to him. For just some such whopping nonsense may have been the thing that put foolish ideas into his head in the beginning. Not that I'm a scoffer at fine ideals, understand. What I say is, a man must keep his feet on the ground all the time—let his ideals be his luxuries. And as far as that goes, it's my profound conviction as a plain and unornamental citizen, after observing the case of Crusoe and one or two others, that an unsound ideal is far more deadly than any two vices put together.

Naturally, I didn't send the paragraph to Crusoe. It would have been a cruel thing to do, and quite pointless. But I did mail it to our friend-in-common, Ira Brunson, the Detroit lawyer, with the notation: "*Exhibit A—Ralph Crusoe!*" For both Brunson and I had been peculiarly interested in Crusoe's career. I don't mean interested in him as an artist, because neither of us knows anything about art—though Brunson does like music (as I write this, it strikes me that I never once heard Crusoe play the violin). But I mean interested in him as a human being, as a prime example of human folly—of just how far a good man can go astray. Interested most of all, I don't doubt, because he made the critical decision of his life in direct opposition to Brunson's

advice and mine, and his subsequent fortunes accordingly became the test to prove which of us had been right. When he actually did come to disaster, I suppose both Brunson and I had to suppress a rather nasty feeling of vindication.

This man Crusoe, you see, followed his particular Glean in dead earnest, put it up to the ravens to feed and clothe his family—elected to quit his job, **PLAY HIS FIDDLE.**

## II

THE whole problem came up quite abruptly and unexpectedly. There the three of us were, in the year 1907, working more or less diligently in the office of the Crusoe White Lead & Color Works on Twenty-second Street, Detroit: Ira Brunson in the sales department; Ralph Crusoe supposedly devoting himself to the production end; and I trying to persuade the firm I could write advertising copy.

Then, all at once, one or two things happened, and Ralph was off his head and baying at the moon.

Of course the situation was there all the time, I suppose, just waiting for something to spring it loose. He was bored to death by the business beyond a doubt; used to be out every night, either at some concert, or playing his violin to admiring women. In the morning he'd come down to work with his head full of tunes and a funny, vacant look in his eyes. But you can't tell me he wouldn't have got over it sooner or later, as other young chaps do; you can't tell me he wouldn't be a successful business man today—except for these one or two coincidences. I'd stake anything on it, and Brunson feels the same way: because Crusoe really wasn't any fool; he wasn't one of those half-baked la-de-das who are always gassing about themselves and their temperaments. If he had been, it wouldn't have mattered so much. But he wasn't. You could hardly get a word out of him about himself. There's a terrific lot of pure bunk about "Art," in my

judgment, and I haven't any use for artists, as a class; they make me sick the way they sneer at business men, like myself. But Ralph Crusoe I did respect—still do, though I think he was as good as crazy about some things. He was absolutely sincere—that's the point. No posing.

One trouble—I'm not sure it wasn't the biggest one—was the paint business. And that's curious, in a way; here I am in 1922, fifteen years later, still advertising paint and having more than my share of fun doing it. Paint, for me, remains the most romantic thing in the world. But not for Crusoe! He always hated it—and I think I'm broad-minded enough by now not to hold that up against him, not to get sore at any man for not liking the same things I do. Ira Brunson, for that matter; he certainly got out of the paint business in a hurry—almost the very minute he graduated from law school. (And why any man should want to be a lawyer!) In Crusoe's case, perhaps if he'd have gone into the advertising end, as I did, he'd have liked the business better; but being obliged to put on overalls and spend the whole day on the first floor and in the basement, watching the hunnies mix paint—turpentine in his nose and eyes, and even in his precious hair, the whole twenty-four hours—well, I think I'd have been keen even on that, but I'm not sure. Crusoe certainly wasn't. Why his grandfather ever handed him such a job I don't know—probably just to find out if he'd stick it. Or possibly, Eddie Klatt had a hand in it.

Even so; Crusoe would have seen it through, I claim, and not made a mess of things, if his grandfather hadn't set off the fuse, at just the wrong stage, by dying.

## III

THE old man was always rabid on the subject of cigarettes, and each noon-hour after lunch, I remember we used to sneak out like schoolboys, through the alley and into the vacant

lot next the paint works. I never knew whether the old man actually owned this lot or simply helped himself to it; at any rate, there were always several rows of empty paint barrels lying side-wise on the ground next the brick wall of the works. This wall had no windows in it, and the lot itself was barricaded from the street by a long, high billboard; so that when we squatted on the row of barrels nearest the wall, and smoked our cigarettes, we felt reasonably secure from discovery. The lot was open to the alley; but the old man never ventured out that way.

Today, though we knew he was home in bed, seriously ill, we skulked out into the lot as usual, with the same cheerful notion we were putting something over on him. It was in the middle of the summer, and hot; we had to avoid certain viscous spots on the barrels. Several of the hands were playing ball in the alley; one of the things that sticks in my mind was a loud dispute that got started among them on the subject of Ty Cobb, the new outfielder on the Detroit team; I remember I wanted to join in the argument, having reached strong convictions on that subject, myself.

Ralph told us, all at once, his grandfather was much worse. His uncle, Eddie Klatt, the general manager of the works, had telephoned him from the old man's house an hour before, he said.

The news gave Brunson and me something of a jolt. All three of us sat there a few minutes, I guess, without saying a word, smoking our contraband cigarettes, staring across the weeds and broken bottles that littered the lot, and up at the brick wall of the next building. At the top of the wall there was an enormous sign emblazoning the merits of Peruna. I can still visualize that sign—the exact arrangement of the letters, the colors of the paint—more vividly than I can recall my own mother's face; even at this particular moment, I think I speculated abstractedly about its advertising value.

"Don't suppose you know—" Brunson began.

"Oh, I know, all right," Ralph stopped staring at the weeds. "My grandfather told me exactly what his plans were."

The question in our minds was, of course, just how the old man's possible death would affect the business, and incidentally our jobs—in other words, who would inherit the paint works. The company was capitalized at fifty thousand dollars, and worth sixty or seventy. The old man's wife was still living, and there had been two children: Ralph's father, who was dead—as was also his mother—and the daughter who had married Eddie Klatt.

"He did?" I asked. "He told you?"

Ralph laughed, somewhat ruefully. "He certainly did. My grandmother gets everything except the business. The business—well, he's fixed it this way. My aunt gets half. I get a fourth, when I'm twenty-five; and if I stay in the business till I'm thirty, I get another fourth."

That struck us offhand as an extremely canny arrangement. The old man thought a good deal of Ralph, liked him a whole lot better than he did Klatt, his son-in-law; but evidently he was a little suspicious of Ralph's violin-playing, wanted to make sure that Ralph would stay by the business until he was old enough to get over his artistic bug.

I was relieved, too. "Thank God, he isn't handing the business over to Eddie Klatt! That's what I was afraid of."

Ralph laughed again, at his own expense. "The old boy's certainly got me lashed to the mast. Knows darn well what I'd do if I could lay my hands on some ready money. So first he fixes it so I don't get a cent for three years; and then, just to make it a cinch—knowing just about how much I love Eddie—he's provided that if I *don't* stick till I'm thirty, I not only lose out on the second bunch of stock, but I'll have the pleasure of seeing it go to Eddie."

"Which means he'd control the com-

pany," Ira Brunson pointed out, with the solemn, judicial manner he was picking up from his law professors.

"Yes, damn his buttons!" Ralph scowled down at this smeared overalls. "The old man knows I'd stay here till hell freezes over, rather than hand Eddie a cool twelve or fifteen thousand dollars."

"Your grandfather is a wise man." Brunson smoked contentedly.

"God! You ought to have seen the way he grinned when he read me that part of the will. It was all he could do to keep from laughing. He thinks he's got me sewed up tight."

"Well, he *has*, hasn't he?"

"I suppose so." Ralph suddenly turned toward Brunson. "Unless I could sell my future rights to someone."

"And let Eddie have the business? Anyway, it can't be done. I doubt if it would be legal. No, my boy, you're hooked, good and tight."

Ralph swore again, and stared across at the Peruna sign. Brunson and I winked at each other: we couldn't have been better satisfied if we had drawn old man Crusoe's will ourselves. Partly it may have been because we hadn't much use for Eddie Klatt—one of those loud-mouthed, pompous windbags who always look as if they'd burst if they were inflated another cubic inch. Bulging eyes, bulging cheeks. A pretty fair paint man, I still maintain, and certainly a regular Jew for making money—but an awful bluffer. He was only a few years older than we were, but the way he used to give orders around the plant, whenever the old man was away! With anybody like the old man, of course, he was just the opposite—almost slavish; for that matter, whenever he wanted favors from anyone, he had the knack of being very persuasive, almost genial.

There wasn't the slightest doubt he thought he ought to run the business, when the old man got through; and Brunson and I absolutely gloated over the thought of his being balked. But what pleased us even more was the spectacle of Ralph Crusoe, all neatly

trussed up and handcuffed to the business for life.

Yet it wasn't wholly a pleasing spectacle, either. He was still staring over at the Peruna sign—then all at once he glanced down, and as I followed the movement, it seemed as if he was looking at his hands, clasped about one of his knees. He was careful about his hands; always during working hours, he protected them from possible injury by wearing heavy gloves. In some way, however, he had managed to cut the back of his left hand; there was a long, jagged wound—not deep, nothing serious, but just enough to disfigure his hand and perhaps interfere a little with his violin-playing.

He said nothing at all; to tell the truth, he had never told us much about his hopes; but in that glance of his, down at his lacerated hand, I could get some idea of just what he'd been thinking and feeling—how he hated his job, how much he wanted to cut loose.

"Best thing that could possibly happen to you," I said. "And ten years from now, you'll agree with us."

He did not look up.

"I suppose so," he granted, and pushed his outstretched fingers through the pompadour of stiff, black hair.

Brunson grinned and patted him on the shoulder. "Just think how glad your girl will be!"

"My girl!" Ralph stared, and so did I.

"Sure thing," said Brunson, and winked.

Ralph seemed utterly disgusted. "Oh, hell!"

At that instant, one of the employees in the alley muffed the baseball, and it came rolling into the vacant lot a few feet in front of us. Ralph vaulted down from the barrel, picked up the ball, and then, by way of letting off steam, threw it back into the alley savagely, with all the force he could put behind it.

His aim was very bad; the baseball just grazed the corner of the building. Simultaneously a man—Eddie Klatt—stepped around from the alleyway, right



into the path of the ball. He had no time to duck, of course; and the ball smashed into the new straw hat he was wearing, knocked it into a pulp fifteen feet away.

The thing happened so quickly that none of us had time to be scared until it was all over. Then we were simply petrified. Eddie Klatt turned pale and leaned against the brick wall.

"Who threw that at me?" he gasped angrily.

Ralph explained and apologized.

Klatt had a nasty temper where employees were concerned. The beefy color came back into his cheeks, and he began swelling up with indignation. He looked around at his new three-dollar straw hat, and grew redder still. I foresaw that his nephew was in for one fine bawling-out.

"Skidoo!" he snapped to the half-dozen factory hands who had gathered around.

Then all at once he calmed down, and spoke in low tones to Ralph.

"The old man's gone." You might have thought, from his voice, he was overcome with grief, was trying to break the news as gently as possible.

Ralph received the information with proper gravity.

"Just now?"

His uncle nodded, and laid one hand comfortingly on his nephew's shoulder. "I came straight from the house to let you know."

After a pause, Ralph made a suggestion. "I suppose we'd better close down the works the rest of the day."

Klatt seemed astounded. "Close down? The old man wouldn't have wanted us to do that, would he?"

Just then, he became aware of Brunson and me for the first time. He seemed a little annoyed, and took Ralph's arm.

"Just come up to the office with me for a few minutes, will you?" he said. "There are a couple of things I want to talk over with you."

Brunson and I went back to our barrels.

"If that ball had ever hit Eddie," I said, "it would have killed him."

"The lucky stiff! He always gets out with a whole skin. I wish to God it had hit him!"

"What's the idea?"

"Don't you get it? Eddie's going to try to kid Ralph into thinking he's a great violinist. Going to offer to buy him out. Hell! He'll skin Ralph out of every nickel, if he can get away with it."

I expressed some doubt.

"Sure he will!" said Brunson. "Watch him. And it's up to us to see he doesn't put it across."

#### IV

OTHER angles of the situation occurred to me.

"What's this about Ralph having a girl?"

Brunson was still scowling over Eddie Klatt. "That's so. She'll be on our side. We've got to get her to work with us."

"But who is she?"

"Miss Mack, up in the office."

Now Lottie—or Lotta—Mack was a nice enough girl—not bad-looking and rather neat. But for the life of me I couldn't imagine Ralph Crusoe having any sentimental interest in her—or any other man, for that matter. Not, of course, because she was a stenographer: heaven knows there are plenty of trouble-making stenographers! What I mean is, she was so quiet and unobtrusive, almost mousey; no particular personality. Pretty efficient around the office, but certainly not the sort of girl you'd expect men to come to blows over, exactly.

Brunson told me what he knew. The old man had always kept a cat around the works to rid the place of rats; and this spring, the cat—as cats will—had had kittens. All of them had been drowned, except one. This survivor, a little white kitten, had made itself at home around the office, and Lottie Mack had more or less adopted it. But one morning, a few weeks before, Eddie Klatt had found the kitten up on top of his desk, messing up his papers. He

grabbed it by the neck and started out of the office. Miss Mack tried to get the cat away from him, but he was too sore, or else he may have thought it was a joke on her. Anyway, he ran down the stairs with the cat.

Ralph happened to come into the office just then, and found Lottie crying. They hurried after Klatt, but by the time they caught up with him, he had thrown the kitten into a barrel of red paint.

"There," he said. "That's one cat will know better next time."

Of course, it was a rotten thing to do. Just like Eddie. But Ralph, being fond of animals, took it much harder than anyone else would have; and then, too, there was the girl crying her eyes out. He swore at his uncle, pushed him out of the way, then yanked the unfortunate animal out.

Of course they couldn't get the paint off, and Ralph finally had to chloroform the kitten. But that was the beginning of things: Lottie looked up to him as her protector, and he felt as if he'd been appointed her especial champion.

But that wasn't the whole story, Brunson explained. Ralph had given him a hint that Eddie Klatt was making himself obnoxious to Lottie in more personal ways: trying to hold her hand—"love her up" was the expression Brunson used—generally taking advantage of the fact he was her employer. Very discreetly, of course: nothing absolutely out-and-out: because Klatt knew if the old man ever got wind of it, he'd fire him in a second.

"So, you see, Ralph and Eddie are competitors for the girl as well as the business," said Brunson.

"But she might be exaggerating, just to get a little sympathy."

"Maybe so. I wouldn't put it past Eddie Klatt; and now the old man's dead, I s'pose he'll be a bit less careful than he has been. Anyway, Ralph believes the girl, and swears he's going to protect her against his uncle. Nice mess, eh? But personally, I'm all in favor of it. See—it's another hold on

Ralph. He won't want to clear out and leave the girl to Eddie."

I thought this over a moment. "They aren't engaged, or anything?"

"Lord, no! I wish they were!" Brunson grunted. "He'd be out of danger."

## V

WHEN we got back to the office, Ralph was still in his uncle's private room. Brunson gave me a significant nudge, then went out to call on the retail trade.

I sat down at my desk in one corner of the outer office and pretended to work. Actually, however, I was watching Lottie Mack. Brunson's story had made me very curious about her. Her typewriter desk was on the opposite side of the room and facing the other way, so that I could watch her as openly as I wanted. Evidently she was drawing off some sort of a statement from the books; she sat, stiffly upright, in front of her machine, working rapidly and incessantly, her fingers darting here and there over the white keys. My general impression of her trimness was reinforced: her white waist looked freshly starched; her back hair—what women call "scolding locks"—was very neat and not unappealing.

"Yes," I told myself, "she's a nice girl, but no world beater." Which, as I look back on it now, is a rather complete description of Lottie Mack at that time.

I might have observed this much without being "in the know." What I shouldn't have noticed were the occasional swift glances she let fly toward the closed door of Eddie Klatt's private office. She must have seen Ralph go in there; and I wondered if she had any inkling of what was up. Her expression so far as I could see it, seemed to suggest a certain anxiety; but that was more or less habitual. Always she appeared slightly apprehensive, somewhat intimidated. I got the impression that her family had no money and that office-work was a grim necessity in her case—a necessity she rather shrank from.

Presently she finished the statement, her back bent forward and she relaxed wearily; then she stood up and prepared to carry the heavy ledger back to its desk in the center of the room.

This was an opportunity for chivalry, and, I must admit, for the satisfaction of curiosity.

"Where does it go?" I asked.

She thanked me and pointed out the place.

There was no one else within earshot, and I gestured her a little nearer my desk.

"I suppose you know the old man is dead."

She nodded. "Yes, I just heard."

Her eyes, a rather light blue, struck me as being very large and a little protruding, perhaps because her face was so thin.

It occurred to me we might as well get her on our side at once. "Ralph Crusoe gets a half of the business, and Eddie Klatt's in there now trying to persuade him to sell out."

Miss Mack appeared startled, and somehow I got the idea this was the exact situation she had been fearing.

"Oh, I hope—" she began, then abruptly reddened, and returned to her typewriter.

She and I went back to work, at least ostensibly; but now I knew we were both watching the door of Eddie Klatt's private office. An hour dribbled by.

"Good Lord! Maybe Ralph's signing up now, before we have a chance to get hold of him. He's a regular child when it comes to business; Eddie can talk him into doing anything!"

It was nearly three o'clock when the doorknob clicked. I saw Miss Mack's head twitch a little, and I swung clear around to see what happened.

First, Ralph appeared in the doorway, and walked out into the office, a blissful look on his face.

"By George! He's gone and done it!"

Behind him came into view Eddie Klatt's florid round face carrying an expression of mingled benevolence and slyness.

"Miss Mack," he requested, "will you bring in your book?"

The stenographer gave one quick appealing look at Ralph, then slowly approached the door. Eddie's well-fed figure partly blocked the way, and she waited for him to make room for her. He still stood there, however, a large fresh cigar in his puffy lips, apparently not comprehending her hesitation. And I must say, the way he looked at her could hardly have reassured her much. Of course it was up to her, in my judgment, to tell him plainly to get out of the way; but she didn't have enough nerve apparently, and at last she went on in, trying not to brush against him. Eddie closed the door.

Ralph, too deep in his trance to notice any of this, had roamed through the outer office and out into the storeroom before I could catch him.

"What's up?"

It took him thirty seconds to come to and even notice who I was. Then suddenly he grabbed me by the shoulders and started dancing up and down.

"It's happened! By Jiminy—it's happened."

I give you my word I felt like tripping him up and sitting on him.

"Wake up! *What's* happened?" I shouted it at him as though he were deaf.

The same look of seraphic joy on his face, he said;

"Eddie's offered to buy me out—enough to send me to Europe for two years."

"How much?"

"Five thousand dollars!"

"Five thousand for your twenty-five?"

He glared reproachfully. "Yes, but that's all years ahead, don't you see? Too long for me to wait. Besides, as Eddie says, he's taking a risk: it may not be legal. He wouldn't do it if he wasn't so interested in helping me."

"Listen!" I said, and I shoved him up against the wall. "Have you signed anything?"

He shook his head. "Eddie's just

dictating the agreement now. But I promised I would."

"Promised—hell! Look here—you're crazy. You've got to clear out of here for the rest of the day—go home and sleep it off."

I took him by the arm and started marching him down the stairs. All at once, he wrenched himself loose and turned on me.

"Keep out of this, d'you hear? I know what I'm about."

All in all, I was relieved when Brunson appeared at the foot of the staircase just then, and took the lunatic off my hands. I think he always had more confidence in Brunson than in me, which was natural enough. Brunson, even then, was the sort of person everybody took his troubles to.

I was glad to be spelled off for another reason. Plain curiosity, I suppose: I wanted to get back to the office and see if anything interesting developed—in Eddie Klatt's private room, I mean.

## VI

YET I was the one, not Brunson, who brought Crusoe back to earth that night. It was too hot to stay indoors, and we had to take our prisoner down to the Belle Isle ferryboat. And I will say, we certainly went to the mat with him on the whole issue—Eddie Klatt, the girl, the paint business and everything. After a couple of trips we got off the boat and started walking. I guess we must have gone halfway around the island. We missed the last boat, I know, and had to hoof it across the bridge and take a street car home.

The only trouble with Brunson was that he tried to argue things out, and you can't argue with a man who's as far gone as Crusoe was that night. I didn't attempt to reason with him; I simply waited till Brunson was through, and then harpooned him where he was weakest—his emotions. I find that's the way to get results with most people.

What Brunson said was perfectly true, of course. It was better than

that—it was a classic. I wish it could be printed and distributed by the Government to all young persons who think they feel the Call. Naturally we all knew even then that Brunson was going to be a big man some day; but I never quite realized till that night what his real caliber was. He had so much tolerance for the other fellow's viewpoint, and a great deal of sympathy. Nothing narrow-minded about him; you felt he had picked the thing up and turned it around and looked on all sides of it. He agreed with nearly everything Crusoe said and felt, but he always carried things one step farther. Brunson was less than a year older than I; and yet he made me feel that night like a two-year-old—as if I didn't know a thing.

Both Brunson and I had a great deal of nerve, I don't doubt, for taking all this upon ourselves. For all we knew then, we might have been tampering with true genius, choking out a career of brilliant promise—and just because of our ignorant prejudices.

We didn't understand: that was the point Ralph always came back to. "You're judging me by yourselves. You like business, and you can't see why everyone else doesn't."

"But look here," said Brunson. "What have you got to go on? A certain amount of talent—sure! You can play pretty well. People tell you, if you could only go abroad and study for a few years, you'd be a wonder. But that doesn't count: someone tells every young musician that. All right, then—here's the way to play safe. Keep on just as you are. Stick to business and the good old payroll—and keep on plugging at your violin at the same time, see?"

This seemed to me unanswerable, yet Crusoe shook his head.

"I realize it's a gamble, all right, but I've got to choose—can't do two things well."

"Think of Eddie Klatt running the business! That's all right with you!"

"I don't care who runs the business, as long as I'm out of it."

"I know, but he's swindling you."

Crusoe couldn't see that. He still thought Klatt was trying to help him. Even said he was sorry he'd misjudged his uncle in the past.

"If you think Eddie's such a prince, you'd better have a talk with Lottie Mack." And then I told him what had happened in the office that afternoon after he'd gone—how, after Klatt had had Miss Mack in his private room for about an hour, there was a sudden noise, as if someone had bumped into the desk, and a curious muffled exclamation; how the door was abruptly pulled open, and Miss Mack came out, looking white and frightened; how later on, I found her crying in the corridor outside. Eddie didn't close the door for several moments; but when he did, his face was still as red as fire.

"He'll go as far as he likes, now the old man's dead," I said.

## VII

EDDIE was on a regular rampage next morning, bossing the office force around, shouting orders, banging his first down on his desk every five minutes—in general, trying to bulldoze everybody. Putting ginger into things, he called it—making business hum.

You could tell he figured he owned the business already.

I wasn't so sure. I had seen Ralph Crusoe and Miss Mack talking together in a corner of the storeroom a bit earlier, before Klatt got down. Talking very earnestly about something, Miss Mack, at least. She was looking up at Ralph as she spoke, and there was something in her attitude almost supplicating, as if she was pleading with him. He was in a rather characteristic posture, staring thoughtfully down at the floor, once in a while looking up at her for an instant and nodding his head slightly. A great deal of high-power emotion being generated, evidently. Almost anything could happen.

I was glad of it. Lottie Mack was putting the finishing touches on our job. Not that I was so keen about

having Ralph fall in love with the girl—which in his case meant marrying her. She wasn't up to him, not in the same class at all.

But if that was the only way of tethering him, I was all for it. Anyway, she was a nice enough girl, as I've already said. He might do worse.

I was gladder still when Eddie began blowing up the place. If there's anything I hate, it's one of these pompous chesty birds, these virile, snorty-nostriled business men, who try to ride roughshod over everybody. They're worse even than artists. Nothing gives me quite such solid satisfaction, as sticking a pin into them, or seeing some one else do it. And that's what Eddie had coming.

About ten o'clock he sent the office-boy down for his nephew. Ralph still appeared undecided when he came in; and I was relieved to observe that Miss Mack got in one good look at him as he passed her desk. That seemed to buck him up; he walked into Eddie's room as if his mind was all made up.

When I had a chance, I whispered to Miss Mack.

"Is he going to sign it?"

She wasn't certain she could trust me, evidently. "I don't know—I hope not." She started toward her desk, then came back. "By the way, if you or Mr. Brunson should happen to hear of a position anywhere for a stenographer, I wish you'd let me know."

I opened my eyes. "You're quitting?"

"I may." She hesitated. "It all depends."

At noon Brunson and I met, as usual, in the vacant lot next door, and waited expectantly a quarter of an hour for Ralph to appear.

"Guess I'll go up and see what's happened to him." Brunson finally decided.

When he returned, he was laughing. "He'll be right out—as soon as he gets through patting Miss Mack's shoulder."

We both felt extremely pleased with ourselves.

But Ralph hadn't definitely made up his mind yet, it turned out.

"I just told Eddie I'd have to think

it over—I wasn't sure, after all, it was the thing for me to do." Having said this much, he seemed about to retire into his shell again.

"But, Eddie—how'd he take it?" Brunson jogged him.

"Oh, he acted sore for a minute, then came around as nice as pie. Said by all means to think it over; what he wanted was to help me. More than that." Ralph's serious face showed bland astonishment. "He said he'd been giving the matter some consideration himself, and he wasn't sure five thousand was enough. Maybe seventy-five hundred would be a fairer proposition."

"Listen!" I broke in. "You hold off another day or two, and Eddie's that conscientious he'll be deciding maybe ten thousand is a fairer offer."

"Oh, no," Ralph corrected me, quite soberly. "He told me seventy-five hundred was his limit."

When we were through laughing, Brunson demanded:

"Well, what's the answer? Are you going to stick with us or chase the rainbow?"

"I don't know." And that was all we could get out of him. But we did make him promise again not to do anything until we had had another session together that night.

Just what happened during the afternoon I never knew. Eddie Klatt's behavior was beyond reproach; he didn't pound his desk even once; when he called in the stenographer for dictation, he left his door open. Ralph didn't come to the office at all. The only thing I did notice was that Miss Mack stepped out, between three and four, and was gone for half an hour. It may have been my imagination; but when she finally came back, she looked to me like a girl who was trying hard to conceal the fact she was extremely happy.

Anyway, Ralph stopped me on the way out, at five o'clock.

"I'm sorry, but I won't be with you tonight."

"Guess again!" I was ready for heroic treatment, if necessary. "What makes you think you won't?"

He looked rather foolish. "I have another engagement."

For a moment, I didn't catch on, at all. "You'll be there at half-past seven, if we have to use chloroform."

"No, really," he said, and pulled a letter out of his pocket. "It isn't necessary. Read this and you'll see."

The letter was addressed to some woman's club—one of these highbrow "culture" affairs. It read, as near as I can remember:

Because of my grandfather's death and the resulting changes in his business, I find I must undertake many new responsibilities. I have therefore decided that I must give up everything else, including my musical ambitions.

I regret very much that I shall be unable to play before you Thursday evening, as I had planned, and trust you will not be seriously inconvenienced.

## VIII

AND then, while Brunson and I were still kicking up our heels, a couple of silly gushy women stepped in and gummed things up. Women who didn't know what they were talking about. Face-rattlers. About the speed of the lady author. I mentioned in the beginning.

Crusoe came down to the works next morning with a fair share of his good resolutions already weakened. What had happened while he was calling on his girl I have no means of knowing; in fact, I'm not even certain it was Lottie Mack he had the date with. At all events, when he got home, instead of going to bed, he decided he would have a sort of farewell violin recital, all by himself. Just prolonging the agony, of course. Played for hours, all the time dreading the idea of giving it up more and more. And when he finally got to bed, he couldn't sleep. The result of this nonsense, naturally, was that he showed up late for work, all tired out and feeling very low in his mind.

He did pull himself together enough, however, to go in and turn down Eddie Klatt's offer; but I judge he was so

half-hearted about it that Eddie didn't give up hope. Instead, he raised his bid to eight thousand—in such a way, of course, that Ralph felt more convinced than ever of his uncle's noble intentions.

Still, I swear everything would have gone through on schedule, if it hadn't been for these two women.

They showed up just before noon. They were the president and secretary of the Culture Club; they had just received Ralph's letter, and being all sick and nervous over it, thought they'd better come right to the office and see if they couldn't change his mind. Understand: they weren't friends of his; they had absolutely no interest in him except to get him to play for them at their one-horse concert, as he'd agreed to do. They had their programs all printed, they said; and it was too late to find a substitute.

One of those ladies' organizations that expect young musicians to come and entertain them free of charge.

As luck would have it, the two women ran into Eddie Klatt first thing. They were a snappy-looking pair, and Eddie was impressed. As soon as they found out who he was, they told him their troubles and implored him to help them.

Eddie put on his best manners and sent for Ralph.

"I'll be glad to do anything I can," he assured them, and went on to explain how interested he was in his nephew's musical career, how he'd offered to send Ralph abroad.

The door to Eddie's office was open, and I could hear everything. So could Lottie Mack, judging from the look on her face.

Ralph came in, all bedraggled with paint and looking generally disgusted with life. Miss Mack tried to catch his eye, and failed. He stood for an instant, trying to get the lay of the land. Neither Eddie nor the women had seen him yet.

Then the thing happened. One of these women exclaimed, in a horrified voice:

"What a pity—a young man with all

that wonderful talent wasting his whole life in a paint factory!"

Ralph, of course, understood perfectly. And I suppose it simply echoed and reinforced what he had been telling himself for months, what he'd been agonizing all night.

Just then Eddie caught sight of him, called him in and closed the door.

I can't explain just why, but I did have a very definite premonition of defeat. I really felt sick at heart. Miss Mack seemed to crumple a bit over her typewriter. A moment later, she got up and walked out; perhaps she realized I was staring at her.

Brunson came in, and I told him the situation. He couldn't believe there was any danger—almost laughed at me.

We laid plans to pounce on Ralph the instant he reappeared, carry him off somewhere, keep him under lock and key, if necessary, till he became perfectly normal again.

## IX

BUT before the door opened, he had not only promised to play for the ladies, but had also signed the written agreement with Eddie. A week later he was on his way to Europe and glory.

I must say for Eddie he handled the thing superbly. He got the two women to work hand and glove with him. Between the three of them, they flattered, cajoled, finessed the poor fish into what he doubtless considered bold, decisive action—burning his bridges behind him, risking nobly, and all that sort of thing.

He certainly came out of his uncle's room looking as if he had the world by the throat. Brunson and me he surveyed as if from a mountain-top; yet just a bit defiantly, too.

And Lottie Mack? It seemed to me he had to force himself to look toward her desk—was relieved when he saw she was not there. Just into what state their relationship had drifted I never found out. I judge there was some sort of understanding—not an engagement, but the sort of thing that precedes an engagement.

Lottie, at any rate, gave notice the next day, and I didn't hear of her again till about the time Crusoe got back from Paris. But he did see her before he left town, at least once. I know that much, but no more. I shouldn't be surprised if he offered to loan her money, or at least helped her find another job. Very likely he thought his future too uncertain to ask her to risk it with him; but from what happened later on, I gather that he more or less expected her to wait for him.

Brunson shook his wise, bald head mournfully, after Ralph's train had pulled out. I did likewise. Yet I was a little envious, I must admit. It was a spectacular, nervy thing to do, in a way.

"Good luck to him," I said.

"He may make a go of it," admitted Brunson. "Here's hoping!"

### X

As I say, I cut out the paragraph containing the lady author's exalted words, and sent it on to Brunson, expecting him to appreciate the irony of it as applied to Ralph Crusoe.

But when he returned the clipping, his only comment was: "Crusoe is on the make—may fool us yet. I'll tell you about him next time you're in town."

I was considerably surprised; because the last time I'd seen Crusoe, he had all the earmarks of being a hopeless failure.

### XI

JUST about four years after his departure—that would make it the summer of 1911—I was sitting one afternoon at my desk, the same old desk, in the corner of the Crusoe White Lead & Color Works office, grinding out copy for an advertising booklet. The office had been enlarged, but at that it was too small to accommodate the increased force. As a matter of fact, we were getting ready to move into the new plant, several miles farther out.

Eddie Klatt, say what you will about him, had speeded up business amazingly. The company's capitalization had been increased to half a million, and there wasn't so much water in it, at that. Of course I can see now he was already making plans to sell out to the trust. You simply have to hand it to him; he's a very clever business man. I don't claim he could have built the company up from nothing, the way the old man did. He didn't have the patience, for one thing. But given his opportunity, he had certainly made the most of it. By now, of course, he owned all of the company's stock—he and his wife together—and was in absolute control.

He's clever, yes, but there's something else to it. He's one of those people who never have bad luck. Has the faculty of always lighting on his feet. I've seen him wriggle out of some of the tightest holes.

I want to hand him his due, even though I never liked him. Personally, I always managed to get along all right with him. I had to; he was my bread and butter. I find you can avoid quarreling with almost anybody, if you make up your mind you've got to. I always worked hard for Klatt, and on the whole he treated me pretty well. Certainly I'd learned a lot from him during those four years.

The office-boy came to my desk and said a lady wanted to see me. I looked around and saw a girl dressed in black, standing near the outer door. When she came nearer, I recognized Lottie Mack.

"Do you remember me?" she asked timidly.

There wasn't so much change in her. She looked older and maturer, of course. And more unobtrusive than ever. Meeker. As if what little personality she once possessed had been ground out of her.

She wanted to find out if I knew of any vacant stenographic jobs. I was mildly surprised to learn that she had married a couple of years before; and that her husband, a railroad clerk, had



recently died leaving her nothing but debts, and a small baby to support.

I felt sorry enough for her, and I took down her married name and address—some number on Sixteenth Street, it was. "I'll inquire around and let you know."

She thanked me; but instead of going, looked around the office a bit apprehensively.

Then she said: "Mr. Klatt isn't in, is he?"

I suppose I stared. She must be up against it to ask help of him!

"Yes, he's in," I told her, "but he's engaged right now."

As a matter of fact, Eddie was in his private room, dictating to Miss Mack's latest successor—a young woman, who apparently would listen to reason.

Lottie—Mrs. Jones, or whatever her name was now—still sat passively beside my desk, and I was getting a little uneasy.

"Look here," I said in very low tones. "I'd be awfully glad to loan you some money—just until you get located."

Unexpectedly, she acquiesced. Seemed cheered up, poor kid, and prepared to leave—for which I was just as well pleased.

"When did Mr. Crusoe get back?" she suddenly asked.

"Mr. Crusoe! Ralph? He isn't back."

She seemed bewildered. "That's funny. I was sure I saw him on a street car this morning."

She stood up to go, when, as luck would have it, Eddie Klatt opened the door of his room and came out into the office. He looked at her, but I don't think he would have known her, if she hadn't spoken to him. Then he flushed up a little, and came over. While she was explaining her errand, I thought he sized her up pretty closely; otherwise he was all friendliness and sympathy; made a note of her address, and said he would see what he could do for her.

Still, I was sorry he'd seen her. Not that I could imagine any man running

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after poor, scared Lottie; as I've already said, she could hardly have been classed as an enchantress, even in her best days. But Eddie: you never can tell about skirt-chaser like him.

I didn't give another thought to what she'd said about Ralph Crusoe; yet the very next day he showed up at the office. And he'd been back in town two weeks already—without letting a soul know.

"That certainly proves you haven't changed," I told him. And it was quite true, I found out after I'd got acquainted with him again. Physically, he seemed a bit heavier; and he'd picked up a foreign air I can't exactly describe. Not his appearance, so much—his queer moustache, his loose suit of clothes. Rather a certain vagueness or aloofness, as if he was far removed from all reality. Wasn't interested in the things the rest of us were—the rapid growth of the city, the new automobile industry, the amount of money men were making. Fundamentally, though, he hadn't altered at all. What both Brunson and I had been most afraid of was that he'd come back a poseur, full of silly swank, completely spoiled. If he did, we were going to cut him off our list. But it hadn't happened: he was just as simple and straightforward as ever—almost childlike.

I had the illusion, sitting there talking to him, that no time at all had elapsed.

"It's a fine state of affairs," I went on, "when your best friends have to find out you're back home, from outsiders."

"I haven't called on a soul yet," he protested.

"Lottie Mack saw you yesterday."

He looked dumbfounded, acted as if he couldn't believe it. Then he told me he'd been trying to locate her ever since his arrival; that about two years ago she'd stopped answering his letters, and he was afraid something had happened to her.

"Something did," I said, eyeing him. "She got married."

I thought, if he was really in love, he'd give himself away at this news.

But he didn't seem greatly cast down. Just surprised. It was only when I acquainted him with Lottie's present straits that he showed much emotion.

"You mean she actually came here and begged Eddie for a job?" To see his expression, you'd have thought it was all his fault. He appeared conscience-stricken. "I must look her up right away."

He seized his hat and cane. That cane alone would have been enough to prove he was no Detroitier.

"How about a little session with Brunson and me tonight?" I suggested.

He said he would come unless we heard from him to the contrary, then hurried out of the office. In another moment he was back.

"I suppose I ought to shake hands with my uncle," he explained.

Eddie Klatt was summoned forth.

Their meeting was one of the most painful incidents I've ever witnessed. Ralph evidently still looked upon his uncle as a benefactor, as a patron of the arts. He seemed to expect a warm welcome. But Eddie—so ingratiating when it came to inducing people to sign contracts, or to making headway with young women—was quite a different proposition now. He treated his nephew like a book-agent, brusquely, arrogantly; walked to the outer door and held it open, suggestively.

Ralph departed without even saying goodbye, his sensitive face hot with humiliation. He and his uncle were exact opposites, and he had no defenses against such boorishness.

Eddie grunted, winked at his new stenographer and returned to his room.

## XII

BEFORE we had talked with the prodigal half an hour that night, both Brunson and I had the same feeling toward him as before—that he was a charming but utterly incapable infant, and that we had somehow been specially appointed to look after him. We ought to have known better by this time; but precious few people, I find, can resist

the conviction they're indispensable.

We met at Brunson's law office.

"Well, how about it?" he asked. "Are you glad or sorry you turned down our advice? Be honest, now."

Ralph's smile was reminiscent. "I wouldn't have missed it for ten paint factories. Paris is the only place in the world worth living in."

"What was the idea of coming back here, then?"

"No more money." He shrugged his shoulders. "I stayed on until the very last minute, hoping some miracle would happen and I wouldn't have to leave."

Brunson stuck out a cross-examining forefinger. "You mean you're busted?"

Ralph opened his pocketbook and counted a thin roll of bills. "Thirty-three dollars."

"Eight thousand shot," said I. "What's the answer? Are you a genius? If not, just how good are you?"

He shook his head. "That's the trouble: I had to come back home before I found out."

"What are you going to do now?"

"Well, I want to keep working hard, do the best I can here in Detroit, and see how I develop."

"I know, Ralph, but to put the thing bluntly: just how do you expect to make a living?"

He was plainly nonplussed, as if such a problem hadn't even presented itself to him. "Why, I don't know. Recitals, I suppose. Concert engagements."

Brunson's skeptical eye caught mine. "Well, just how do you expect to get these engagements you talk about?"

He hadn't thought much about that, either. "I guess I can manage it all right."

"Listen!" I said to Brunson. "It's up to us to take charge of this half-wit, and sell him to the community. We've got to be his press-agents and put him on the map."

And I will say we did it. I've never handled a publicity campaign that was a better job, or that I got so much fun out of. Brunson and I made ideal col-

laborators: he was in touch with everything that was going on in the city, he knew people—had a number of newspaper cronies; for my part, I supplied the advertising ideas.

We started that very night—Tuesday. Brunson, after looking very wise for half an hour, fished an evening paper out of the waste basket, and showed us an article about an open-air concert that was to be given Thursday afternoon. A society affair, for the benefit of a tuberculosis fund.

"Wonder if you couldn't break in there," Brunson speculated. "Looks like a big thing."

I read over the program. "They don't seem to have any violinist."

It seemed a rather lucky coincidence, especially when Ralph pointed out that the organization promoting the affair was the same woman's club that had messed things up for us, four years ago.

There wasn't any time to waste on round-about methods. In five minutes Brunson had the club secretary on the wire, and was explaining that Ralph had just gotten back from Europe, covered with glory; that no one else in town knew anything about it yet; that he, Brunson, was interested in the tuberculosis society—which was true—and it had just occurred to him that here was a splendid opportunity for the woman's club to add to its prestige by being the first to introduce the returned genius, and at the same time to make the concert twice as successful.

"Of course you'd want to announce it in the papers tomorrow, just as conspicuously as possible," Brunson went on. Yes, Mr. Crusoe was in his office this very minute, and he might be induced to help along a worthy charity.

Well, the secretary was all excitement, naturally. Brunson put Ralph on the 'phone, and the thing was sewed up then and there, even to the two pieces he would play.

"There's our start," I said, and we all sat back, feeling proud of ourselves. Brunson suddenly looked thoughtful.

"What name are you going to use?"

"My own name, of course." Our

protégé still appeared bewildered, as if he wondered what would happen next.

"I don't like it," Brunson shook his head. "It doesn't sound right. 'Ralph Crusoe.' Too ordinary. Don't sound important enough. People want to be impressed—you got to give 'em a mouthful."

"Brunson's right," I said. "Look here, don't you own a middle name?"

Ralph got red, the way most men do when you ask them this information. But finally we pried it out of him—"Edgel." After all, it wasn't any sillier than most middle names.

"Fine! 'Ralph Edgel Crusoe.' Now that sounds artistic."

"But—"

"Shut up!" commanded Brunson. "This is our party. All musicians are dragging in their full names. Nine out of ten authors are doing the same thing. Why, in God's name, I don't know. But it's the style, it's what people expect—and if you don't do it too, they'll think there's something the matter with you—that you can't be such a wonder after all."

I had an idea. "Why not cut out the 'Ralph' entirely—call him just 'Edgel Crusoe'?"

Brunson shook his head. "Sounds too sweet."

At that, Ralph exploded. He wasn't going to stand being made ridiculous. Besides, the whole business, all our publicity plans, seemed cheap to him. He was a serious artist, he said, interested only in the quality of his work. He wasn't willing to lower his standards for all the money in the world; he detested the man who tried to be sensational just to get an audience.

We began to see we might have difficulty with him.

"See here," Brunson checked him. "You didn't follow our advice four years ago, and look what's happened. You're back here, stone broke. Now we're willing to help you all we can; but if we do, you've got to forget a lot of nonsense and listen to us. I don't blame you for trying to dodge the spotlight; it shows you're still a normal

male. But you've chosen to be a musician, and you've got to play the game—the unpleasant as well as the pleasant. Well, you can't expect to make a living out of the public, and still tell it to go to hell. You can't crawl into your shell, and expect people to be interested in you."

Ralph had a different theory. "If a man does a first-class job—if he plays the violin well enough—people are going to come to his shell to listen to him."

"Once in a thousand years." Brunson looked disillusioned. "Only the really great can afford to be modest. No, sir, the thing to do is to beat your drum, make all the noise you can, exploit yourself, let us be your barkers—anything to get people's attention, make them curious. Once you've done that, give them your real stuff; if it's good enough, they won't go away."

My arguments, if less logical than Brunson's, at least carried more weight.

"Why not hold your nose a few months, deliberately go into this thing to coin every cent you can—until you've made enough to go back to that dear Paris?"

That did make him sit up and think—with the result that he finally telephoned the club secretary and told her to make it "Ralph Edgel Crusoe."

From that night till the following Sunday, Brunson and I worked like dogs. These, as I remember it, were the high-spots:

Wednesday noon, we dragged Edgel to the photographer's. He had pawned his dress suit in Paris, and I had to lend him mine. Great difficulty in inducing him to look properly temperamental.

Wednesday afternoon and Thursday morning: The newspapers gave fairly decent space to the announcement that he would play. The *Journal* however, had the name, "Ralph Edgel Caruso."

Thursday afternoon: The concert. It rained, and the affair had to be held indoors. Brunson attended, and reported a success. Ralph's playing seemed a little stiff and cold, he said;

and he absolutely refused to do the "Humoresque" for an encore, as requested by a number of the ladies. But the society reporters were there, and Brunson saw to it that they got an earful.

Friday morning: No report of the concert. Consternation—then we learned it would appear Sunday.

Thursday, Friday and Saturday: Appointments for Ralph with representatives of the press, Brunson or I invariably being present in the rôle of censor. I had great difficulty, in particular, during an interview with a *Free Press* reporter upon the subject of the modern Latin Quarter of Paris. Ralph raved about the life there, as usual, which was quite all right, of course—until he happened to get started about Detroit. All I'll say is, his remarks about Detroit as an art center were forceful, but peevish—hardly likely to make him popular in his home town. It cost me a fifteen-cent cigar to persuade the reporter to forget that part.

Let me say, right here, I've never known a man with less sense of publicity values. We had to labor night and day to wheedle anything interesting out of him. He thought what we wanted was his opinion about the tendencies of modern French music. I tried to get him started about the immorality of Paris, for example—something snappy that would interest everybody; but not Ralph—he hadn't even noticed such things. The only tangible bit of copy we worried out of him was a letter from his teacher in Paris, telling how good he was; this didn't mean anything to us, but the music editors ate it with a spoon.

When you consider how we were handicapped, we didn't do so badly. The Sunday newspapers carried no less than six sizable stories, devoted to Ralph Edgel Crusoe, as follows:

- 1, 2. Articles on the musical page of both papers, displaying two-column photographs of our charge in my dress suit, and setting forth very positively that he was hot stuff.
- 3, 4. Long accounts, in the society columns

of both papers, of Mr. Crusoë's brilliant playing at the tuberculosis concert. The society reporters fell all over each other in trying to find words to describe Ralph's effect on his audience. Perhaps, as Brunson said, these reporters didn't know much about music, but they certainly knew what they liked.

5. A half page in the *Free Press* magazine section, devoted to the Latin Quarter Story, and illustrated with a couple of snapshots of Mr. Crusoë in Paris, dug up by me from the bottom of his trunk.

6. This was the masterpiece: a front-page story in the *News-Tribune*. Brunson put this one across and made me envious for life. The *News-Tribune* was boosting hard for municipal ownership in those days, and incidentally attacking the Detroit United Railway at every turn. Part of the campaign was to show how much better the street-car service was in other places, particularly in those cities that had municipal ownership. So here was our Edgel, solemnly discussing transit conditions in Europe, and smiting the D.U.R. hip and thigh. Well, it was funny—I don't think he even knew what it was made street cars go; Brunson had to tell him what to say. But it was wonderful publicity, especially since the article referred to him as a distinguished violinist.

### XIII

A MORE brilliant piece of press-arguing I can't imagine.

In a way, I suppose we all expected too much from it—concert engagements by the hundred, and all that sort of thing. Now, I know enough about the music game to realize things can't be done that way. A man needs a lot more capital than eight thousand dollars to get started in the big leagues; and he's almost obliged to work from New York. Besides, he's got to be a great deal better performer than Ralph Crusoë was.

Plenty of offers there were, but all of them charity affairs. Too many, in fact: other women's clubs couldn't understand why if he'd consented to perform for one outfit, he wasn't willing to do likewise for them; they were very sore when he started turning them down. In short, Detroit was perfectly willing to gape at this newest musical phenomenon, but not to pay its good money to listen to his playing. I think there was one bid to play at a private

musicale—for ten dollars! For that matter, of course, it was an off-season—September—still too warm for concerts.

But our campaign did achieve one tangible result immediately—as much as we had any license to expect. The largest conservatory in the city began negotiating with Crusoë with a view to making him head of its violin department. Two days later, a smaller school made a similar offer.

"Fine stuff!" said Brunson. "Start them bidding against each other, and you'll get a real proposition."

Well, we had to argue that out with him, too. He claimed he'd rather dig ditches than teach; a few years of that sort of thing made a hopeless hack out of a man.

"It's just a temporary makeshift," I set forth. "Pays your board bill till something better turns us. Helps you get back to Paris that much sooner."

"This is the point," Brunson added. "We've given you a good start, haven't we? Now the thing to do is to consolidate, dig in. Once you've done that, we'll plan a new campaign."

Before the week was over, both conservatories had made him guaranties of so much a month—not an awful lot, but as much as either Brunson or I was making. The bigger conservatory offered him more than the smaller one, and promised to give him a good deal of advertising—told him he could arrange his teaching hours practically to suit himself.

We used every means, short of physical violence, to persuade him to jump at the chance; but at the end of another week he was still borrowing money from us and trying to make up his mind what to do.

### XIV

At this stage, Brunson told me one thing he'd forgotten to mention before.

He had seen Lottie Mack at the tuberculosis concert—sitting in the very last row, as if she felt out of place in such a glittering crowd and wanted to remain as inconspicuous as possible.

"I don't know positively that she

came with Ralph," he said, "but I'm sure the two of them sneaked off together afterwards."

In turn, I told Brunson about Lottie's reappearance at the office, and how disturbed Ralph had been when he heard about it.

"That's bad, isn't it?" remarked Brunson. "He isn't in love with her, d'you think?"

"I doubt it," I said. "But you never can tell."

"But heavens, Maude! He mustn't think of tying himself up with any woman. Lottie would have been fine for him four years ago, but not now. She can't help him any—in fact, she'd pull him down. Don't you see: it's his business to play up to all the women, make them all interested in him. It's the women who buy concert seats. It's the women who make or break musicians. The minute a man marries, he stops being a romantic possibility; the women can't work up much excitement about him. But if Ralph has to fall in love with anybody, let him pick out a girl who can boost him. Someone with money or influence."

"No doubt of it at all," I said rather skeptically. "But you know Ralph. If he thinks Lottie is up against it, he'll feel it's his business to protect her. That's the way he is. Of course, I don't know what's going on; but I'll wager even money that's where he is five nights a week."

Brunson smiled grimly. "It's about time we looked into their little affair, don't you think?"

Though we had no appointment with Ralph that evening, we made a point of dropping in on him just after dinner. He was shaving, obviously getting ready to go out; but we settled comfortably into chairs as if we had come to stay; and Brunson started in on the subject of the conservatory contract.

Ralph became more and more restless, yet he was too polite to tell us to get out. Finally, about half-past eight, he asked us to excuse him; he had an engagement.

"You don't mind if we go part way with you?" asked Brunson.

"Not at all." But he looked as if he minded a good deal.

"He probably has a heavy date with one of his club women," I suggested. "Wouldn't like to have her see his roughneck friends."

Our victim squirmed a little, tried to shake us off when he took the street-car, finally led us to within a block of the address Lottie had given me.

Then he stopped short. "I'm sorry, but here is where I leave you. I'm an hour late already."

He was so flustered we finally let him go; then a few minutes later, walked cautiously past the house—a rather shabby frame cottage.

I noticed a touring car in front.

"By George!" I exclaimed, and took a closer look. "I'll bet that's Eddie's machine."

The front door of the house opened and closed just then; and sure enough, there was Klatt's thick-set figure emerging from out of the porch's shadows, and hastily climbing into the car.

## XV

Next morning, Eddie was all gummed up. Snappish even to his pet stenographer. Like a man who's been crossed in love. We were all glad enough when he finally shut himself up in his room to sulk the rest of the forenoon.

Along toward twelve o'clock, I had that odd sensation everyone experiences at times: as if someone was staring hard at me from behind. Finally, I just had time to look around—and there was Ralph in the doorway, beckoning me to come outside.

"What the devil's the matter with you?" I demanded.

He was all wrought up, anybody could see. His face was absolutely colorless and his mouth twitched. He looked more like a drug fiend between sessions than anything else I can think of.

"Is he in there?"

"Who—Eddie?" I nodded.

"Alone?"

My hand was on his arm, and I could feel him trembling—as if he were scared to death and yet forcing himself to go through with his program.

Klatt had been bothering Lottie again, he said: trying to get her to go out riding, offering to lend her money, promising to find her a job. Last night, he had found her alone, and when she refused to go out with him, proceeded to pull some pretty rough stuff. Ralph's arrival had been almost providential. After Eddie's disgruntled departure, she had told him the whole story.

"He made her cry."

I was rather excited myself, by this time. "And what d'you think you're going to do?"

He would not answer. Just stood there quivering, then made a move toward the office.

"Wait a minute, now!" I obstructed. "See here, are you quite certain the little girl isn't stringing you a bit?" He gave an angry twist. "Anyway, lay off the melodrama. You can't get the best of Eddie at that game; he'll always beat you in the end."

From the look in his eyes, anybody could see he thought he was a kind of high and mighty crusader, appointed to avenge the wrongs of the helpless. Yet hating the job terribly.

All of a sudden he had got by me, and was in the office. Before I could overtake him, he had reached the door of Eddie's room and burst in.

The door stayed open, and I stopped still, half inclined to follow him and prevent the row, yet more or less fascinated by the prospect of a good shindy. The office force stopped work. Everybody waited.

Eddie Klatt was sitting at his desk when I first caught sight of him, the habitual cigar tilted up from the corner of his mouth. But when he saw his nephew, he got up mighty quick, retreated a couple of steps. Ralph walked up close to him, and said something I couldn't hear. At any rate, Klatt gave a frightened look out at us, then apparently decided to bull things through;

he took Ralph's elbow and pointed to the door.

"Get out!" he said. But his voice shook a little.

I never was more interested in all my life. It was a first-class show, and I had a free ringside seat. What was going to happen I hadn't the faintest idea. For all I knew Ralph might have a gun, and be all set to shoot up the place. He was just crazy enough to do it.

Eddie, encouraged by the fact nothing had happened to him so far, gave the intruder a little shove. Then Ralph hit him square in the mouth. Not very hard, I judge: Eddie didn't fall over, or anything. Just enough to shake him up a little and ruin a first-class cigar.

Why the deuce, as long as he was going to hit him at all, couldn't Ralph have put some steam into and knocked Eddie kicking? As it was he just made him ugly.

Immediately there was great excitement. The blonde stenographer screamed and called up the police station.

But Ralph, having satisfied the code of honor, turned around and stalked majestically from the room. Then there was an unexpected sequel—screamingly funny, you'd say, if you saw it in a movie. Eddie caught up with his nephew just as the latter crossed the threshold and gave him a savage kick from the rear. Ralph spun around to a fresh attack; but just as he launched a second blow, Eddie slammed the door shut, and Ralph's fist encountered the ground glass panel—went right through it, smashing the pane into a hundred splinters.

Eddie had succeeded in locking the door from the inside; but if I'd been Ralph, I'd have knocked out the rest of the glass and gone in after him. The whole trouble with Ralph, in fact, was that he hadn't got roaring mad; to him the whole fracas was just a disagreeable job his conscience had turned over to him. Apparently the kick hadn't disabled him: he walked quietly

out of the office, feeling he'd done his duty—that somehow smashing in the panel of Eddie's door had more than made up for the booting. What you'd call a moral victory.

Of course the whole thing seems absolutely ludicrous to me now—like most such brawls. Ralph found out next day he'd dislocated one of his knuckles when he hit his uncle. He had to have it X-rayed and wear it in a sling for two weeks, which meant, of course, he couldn't even touch a violin bow.

For his part, Eddie evidently felt he had had the better of the fray. Outside of a slight cut on his lip and the loss of his cigar, he was quite undamaged. The one kick he had got in vindicated his prestige, and gave him the victory; besides, the whole office had seen the kick and no one but the stenographer and myself, Ralph's first blow.

Eddie, in fact, told the stenographer to countermand the call for police assistance.

"Guess that young cub won't be coming around again for a while," he grunted. "I don't need no help."

This was discreet of him, of course. The more the affair could be hushed up, the better. Mrs. Klatt might misunderstand his philanthropic efforts on behalf of destitute young stenographers.

Everything considered, though, I suppose it must be admitted that Ralph accomplished his purpose. Eddie would surely not annoy Lottie Mack again, for some time to come.

## XVI

THAT night, when we descended on Ralph again, he was feeling very low—a reaction, I judge, from all of the morning's excitement. His hand had swollen up and was hurting him a great deal.

Brunson and I were prepared for almost anything; but we felt a little better when it turned out he had no engagement with his girl. And then, to cheer us up still more, he told us he

had made up his mind to sign up with one of the two conservatories.

"You act almost as if you had brains," I said.

Brunson beamed all over. "You'll tie up with the big fellow, won't you?"

"I don't know—I suppose I ought to. But the smaller conservatory has higher artistic ideals. I like the crowd there better; they're more honest."

"Go where the money is, every time," I advised. "The more you make, remember, the sooner you get back to Paris."

For a change, he seemed quite tractable, willing to agree with everything we said, and we, poor dolts, sat gloating over our hard-won victory.

How cocksure we were! You'd have thought we might have remembered what happened before. The very day he smiled at us—mysteriously, as if he knew he had something on us—ought to have warned two such wise birds as we took ourselves for.

The next afternoon, Brunson phoned me.

"Seen the *News* yet?" His voice seemed calm enough. "Well, get a copy. Couple of stories about Edgel."

On page five I found a brief announcement that our protégé had made a connection with the smaller of the two conservatories. "Mr. Crusoe has consented to take a limited number of advanced pupils," etc.

The idiot! Turning down a better proposition just because of his finicky notions about artistic ideals. Still, that wasn't fatal. The principal thing was he'd had enough sense to make connections with a payroll.

I looked through the paper twice before I found the second item—in the one spot I hadn't really examined—the front page. Half a column, with a big headline, and the photograph.

Great is publicity! Brunson and I had made our man into a conspicuous figure; we had given him a definite and powerful news value; we had created a public personality—and suddenly, the thing was beyond our control, snapping its guys like an overinflated balloon.



Ralph Crusoe, obscure, unknown—as he had been three weeks ago, before we took hold—could have done the thing without the slightest interest attaching; but Ralph Edgel Crusoe, the famous violinist, the authority on the Latin Quarter of Paris, the well-known expert on European street railways—that was quite different. Whatever he did became sensational. The public's curiosity about him had been whetted, and now it must be satisfied. I hate to think what the papers would have made out of his remarkable joust with Eddie Klatt.

The headlines were something like this:

CRUSOE WEDS  
BOYHOOD SWEETHEART

*Violinist and Widow Are Married by Justice  
of the Peace*

*Couple Make Effort to Keep Ceremony  
Secret; Romance of Long Standing*

XVII

I SHOULDN'T wonder if I've given a rather unfair impression of Crusoe. Pictured him as an absolute minny, who deserved nothing better than what he got. And of course I do think he was a weak fool—utterly lacking in common sense and sound judgment about practical things. Nevertheless, I did like him, and I felt a great deal of sympathy for him. Even respect in a way. You see, where he slipped up, as I've said before, was in being too fine-grained, too conscientious.

I still have a picture of him in my mind, as he looked before he ever started out on his wild-goose-chase to Europe and as he still looked at the time of his marriage; and I repeat there was something very likable about him, something in his expression that would have attracted anybody. So pathetically hopeful, so sure that all he had to do was stick to his ideals and everything would be lovely. And when I remember him as I last saw him, several years after his return to Detroit—rather seedy and petered out, a fail-

ure, a middle-aged hack teacher with a hang-dog look in his eyes, all his hope gone—well, as I say, I should like to encounter that dumpy, prosperous lady authoress.

Ralph, of course, had no business marrying Lottie; he simply put himself out of the running then and there. Why he did it still remains a mystery. She was helpless and unhappy; she would have clung to any man who was kind to her. I won't say they didn't love each other. But for a fellow in Ralph's shoes to tie himself up—especially to a widow with a child on her hands—well, I give it up. And a couple of years later Lottie had another baby.

Theoretically, he could still pull out. Lottie wasn't an expensive sort of wife; they could live pretty economically. And they had no rent to pay; it seems she had inherited the house where she lived, subject to a mortgage. But practically, he was done for, so far as ever being a first-rater.

Just as Brunson had predicted, his marriage to an unknown girl had the effect of stripping off most of the glamor we had laid on so carefully and meant to have him capitalize. Not that he would ever have made a ladies' pet, because he had none of the tricks of that game—no small talk, absolutely no knack of self-exploitation, of pushing himself forward or of building up a little clique of log-rollers. But if he'd had the sense to stay single, that wouldn't have been necessary. With his good looks and his natural charm—which, God knows, I used to envy him!—he needn't have done a thing—just stay up on his pedestal and let the women rave about him.

That first year, things went fairly well. His conservatory gave him a great deal of advertising, kept him before the public. He had more pupils than he could take care of, though I suspect they weren't all exactly "advanced." There were several paying recitals, also, in Detroit and some of the smaller towns of the State—Bay City, Kalamazoo, Ypsilanti, etc. But all this time he was losing ground, in a way—that

is, he was becoming a common, garden variety of person, instead of an awe-inspiring celebrity with a halo around his head. In short, it was a case of too much familiarity: people were getting to know him; he carried no airs at all, and before long, they began to tell themselves he didn't amount to so much, after all. People like to gape at strange, unaccustomed paragons well enough, but there's always an element of resentment in it, I think: they like to drag the idol down to the common level, to feel that they are just as good as he. In Ralph Crusoe's case, there were other levelling processes at work. Nowhere will you find such petty jealousy, so much back-biting, as among musicians. (Unless actors are worse.) The other violinists of the city, the attachés of rival conservatories, set about deliberately to belittle this latest poacher upon their hunting grounds.

In a couple of years, when all the excitement over Ralph had died away, what might have been expected happened. Another young violinist came to town fresh from Europe, teachers' testimonials and all. He didn't have any such press agents as Brunson and me; but he did break into print. No nonsense about him; he knew exactly what game he was playing, admitted openly that he was perhaps the best violinist in the world. Probably he wasn't even as good as Crusoe, for all I know; the fact remains, he made everyone think he was much better. In no time at all, the biggest conservatory, the one Ralph had turned down, gobbled him up with a great flourish of trumpets. He was the sensation of the day, the alluring novelty, the New Man. People forgot all about Crusoe. "Oh, yes, he's good, a very competent teacher, not at all brilliant—but he can't *compare* with Hubert Grayson Larimer!" All of Ralph's fair-weather friends flocked to Mr. Larimer's glistening banners. And of course it must have hurt him. He jeered at popularity, but he was human and he was sensitive. I doubt if he had it in him to build up a philosophy to tide him over inevitable slumps like this.

There was no talk now of his going back to Paris. It took all he could earn, apparently, to support even an unobtrusive wife and two children. Lottie's house was old and required constant doctoring-up, and he had to pay the taxes and the interest on the mortgage. He was making no headway at all. Slipping back, if anything. Outwardly, he and Lottie seemed to get along fairly well together, but always there must have been that conflict between his musical ambitions and the necessities of his family. I wonder how many times it must have come back to him that his wife and children were a drag upon him, that he had made the one irreparable blunder when he married her.

Brunson and I saw less and less of him during these years. We were still his friends; but you know how you feel when you've tried to help a man twice, and both times he's kicked you in the shins. You suspect your advice isn't wanted. So we kept hands off. There was nothing we could do, anyway.

It was too bad, as Brunson said, that Ralph had to be disillusioned, had to see his dreams and his hopes go to smash. "But after all, that's not an entirely uncommon tragedy. He'll get over it, and anyway, he has an assured income the rest of his life; we did that much for him."

While Crusoe was marking time, we two were on the upgrade. Brunson was making a name for himself, building up a solid professional reputation, attracting substantial clients, thinking of getting married. Curiously enough, he had a streak of idealism in him, too—but always the sane control that Ralph lacked so badly. It was one of his theories that a lawyer, once established, ought to devote a part of his time to charity cases—community business, he called it. Presently, he was representing one or two of the city's philanthropic organizations.

My own career was certainly not spectacular. When we moved into the new plant, Eddie gave me the title of adver-

tising manager, and a little later, when he helped swing the big merger of paint companies, I was promoted to the same position for all of the Detroit plants. Four years ago I became advertising manager for the entire combine, and moved to the head office at Cleveland, where I still am. Not so remarkable, you see, but better than average.

It was only a few days before I left Detroit that I happened to run across Crusoe on a Woodward Avenue street car. I presume I was feeling rather cocky over my new job, a bit disposed to look down on anybody who hadn't done as well as I had. But I felt sorry for him, at that, he looked so down-at-the-heels. Everything about him gave a fatal suggestion of failure. I was sporting a new fur overcoat; his coat was almost disreputable around the cuffs. The violin-case that stood between his knees didn't look successful. His moustache drooped down at the ends; his eyes had a tendency to glare. But what shocked me most of all, what stamped him as a man who had lost his pride of appearance, was the discovery he had let his teeth go to seed. One of the front lowers was entirely missing.

The sort of derelict, in short, that any dog would feel justified in biting.

We sat a few blocks, side by side, trying to make conversation, but underneath sizing each other up, thinking of the past and of the separate ways we had chosen. Nothing very romantic about him now, surely. Perhaps I showed my self-approval; I couldn't help noticing, too, how people stared at us, as if surprised that I should be talking to such an unshaven nondescript. At any rate, Crusoe was not in a friendly mood, he rather sneered whenever he spoke, and he left the car without even wishing me luck.

All in all, he gave me an impression of extreme bitterness, and I felt very much depressed.

"Brunson is wrong," I told myself. "He'll never get over it."

## XVIII

ACCORDINGLY, as I've already stated, I was greatly surprised when Brunson sent back the lady author's golden advice, with the comment that Crusoe was on the make—might fool us yet.

I had to go to Detroit on business about a month later; and as soon as possible, I dropped in on Brunson to get the details. But the moment I mentioned Ralph's name, his face clouded up and he looked utterly wretched and sad.

It was true, he said, that Ralph's fortunes had taken a decided turn for the better—and then, just when Brunson had begun to hope he might be able to make something of his life after all, just when the luck had started to break for him and he was beginning to hold up his head again—apparently to find himself—there had been a shocking catastrophe.

## XIX

CRUSOE turned up again, Brunson said, late one afternoon in the fall of 1921. They hadn't even seen each other for over a year. Brunson had become an extremely busy lawyer; he was married, and what little leisure time he had, he gave to his family.

But he was glad to see his visitor, and curious to know how he was getting along. Ralph was a more forlorn specimen than ever, his clothes were shabby and untidy; and he was beginning to look old, in spite of the fact he was not far past thirty. His face was careworn, and his hair had thinned out. Any doctor would have diagnosed stomach trouble, actual or imaginary. Brunson said he surmised the object of the visit was to negotiate a loan; and this impression was strengthened when his caller began by announcing he wanted a favor.

"Certainly," Brunson agreed, and prepared to reach for his pocketbook. He was going to add: "How much?" when he noticed for the first time a rather peculiar expression in Crusoe's face—a certain suppressed enthusiasm,

a look of hopefulness trying to break through.

"I want you to get me a job at your settlement school. Teaching the violin."

Brunson was as much astonished as a person of his phlegmatic disposition ever can be. For a moment, he couldn't get his bearings. The settlement school was one of his pet projects; he had helped organize it a few years before, for the purpose of giving the poor children of the city a chance to take music lessons at a nominal price—ten or fifteen cents a lesson.

For an instant he had a suspicion Crusoe had been drinking. Someone had told him of seeing Ralph on the street one day, very much the worse for wear—how he was getting himself in wrong at the conservatory where he still taught.

"What's the idea?" he asked after he had finished starting. "Been fired?"

Ralph gave one of his croaking laughs. "Not yet. I want to fire myself." Then he became very solemn. "I've thought it all out. It's this way: there's no hope any more of my ever realizing my own ambitions. I can never be a great violinist myself. So I want to do the next best thing: I want to devote the rest of my life to helping others to realize their dreams. No,"—he held up his hand when Brunson started to interrupt—"I can't go on at the conservatory any longer. Fed up, stale. I'm just a hack, just a machine, not doing the slightest good to anybody. God! I'm so sick of it. I want to help those who need help. I want to give myself to them. Pour myself out! You need another violin teacher down at the settlement school. Well, that's where I belong."

The thing became clearer. There were precedents for Ralph's case. Brunson had come in contact with other people who wanted to go in for social service work; and most of them were individuals who had been likewise disappointed in their own hopes, and who were trying to find solace by helping others. "What we call the process of sublimation," Brunson explained to me,

"and it can be very dangerous. A splendid idea in theory, but not often in actual practice. The average social worker is good for only about four years—then he's worn out with sheer discouragement."

Yet Brunson hated to dim that new hopeful look in his caller's eyes. Besides, he knew from past experience that opposition only made Ralph more stubborn. A downright refusal to help him would merely irritate him; he would go to the other settlement school; somehow or other he would put his idea into effect. Brunson didn't know exactly what to do; it seemed wisest to appear to sympathize with the project, but to suggest unsurmountable difficulties.

"It's true enough we could fit you in," he told Crusoe; there was no use denying the fact. "It's a fine thing for you to offer to do for us. I wish we could accept, but unfortunately, we can't pay you enough to make it possible."

Ralph discounted that. "I know and I don't care."

"The fact remains, nevertheless. What we pay might be barely enough for a single man to live on, but you couldn't possibly support your family. Too bad it has to be so. Perhaps in another year or two—"

His only response was an irritated gesture that seemed to sweep all such considerations aside. "Money isn't the important thing right now. We'll get along somehow."

"But how about your wife? Is she willing to have you do this? You can't let your own children starve, you know, while you're helping other people's kids."

It didn't seem to have occurred to Ralph that his family had any voice in the matter.

Brunson, more or less baffled, said he wanted to think the matter over, and advised Ralph to do the same.

The next day, Lottie came to his office, meeker, more timid and colorless, more pinched-looking than ever, bearing telltale marks of drudgery and neglect. She had heard the news the night

before; her husband hadn't had the sense to give her an opportunity to volunteer her co-operation, to feel she was making some contribution to his project; he had simply announced the new plan as a settled fact, whether she liked it or not.

Lottie seemed frightened. She begged Brunson, in the first place, not to tell Ralph of her visit. And she wanted him to use all his influence to prevent the calamity. Already they were desperately poor—in debt, unable to pay the mortgage interest—with Ralph earning less money each year. She didn't know what would happen to them unless he could be persuaded to change his mind.

And this was the girl Crusoe had married because he wanted to protect her!

Brunson said he felt like shedding tears. At his sympathy, poor mouse-like Lottie broke down completely, told Brunson details he hadn't suspected. Crusoe had really been drinking a good deal, as a relief from his self-loathing. And he had been growing constantly more quarrelsome—he, the gentlest, most amiable man in the world! What seemed to make Lottie most resentful was his treatment of the children—his stepchild, particularly. She, being the mother, wanted them to be as well-dressed and well-fed as other children, was willing to fight to give them a chance in the world; he would only sneer at her, when she asked him for money for them. She was his outlet for all his suppressed bitterness.

"I don't see how I can stand it much longer," Lottie sobbed.

Brunson, deeply concerned, sat up nights trying to find a solution. There was no use in trying either to persuade or coerce Crusoe; that was certain enough. What he finally achieved was an admirable compromise: Ralph was to divide his time between the conservatory and the settlement school; Brunson discovered, after consulting with the conservatory people, that Ralph's teaching time there could be greatly condensed without much loss of income.

It seemed the best way out; and finally Ralph was induced to agree to it. But Brunson still had serious misgivings about what effect the settlement school would have on him, once his first enthusiasm had spent itself. Crusoe seemed much too sensitive a type to stand up under that drab, wearing life.

## XX

You can't work out another man's salvation for him. All you can do is stand by and help him over the rough spots—that is, if he'll let you. This was what Brunson undertook to do. He realized that Crusoe was in a bad way, and he promised himself that he would keep in close touch with developments, be ready to jump in with first aid whenever the crisis came. It was all he could do; beyond that point he was helpless.

He blames himself to a certain extent for going to sleep on the job; thinks possibly he might have prevented the smash. I don't agree with him; it was in the cards, that's all; it was the final logical episode in the career of a man who was an idealist and a fool. It was inevitable from the moment Crusoe signed that agreement in Eddie Klatt's office. You could almost have charted the whole thing out from the beginning—not the details, but the general curve.

The director of the settlement school gave glowing accounts of Ralph from the first—of his energy, his patience, his gusto. Brunson wasn't surprised; this was exactly the way other teachers of the school started out. Privately, he doubted if Ralph would last six months. But when the fall and winter passed and Ralph apparently was still going strong, Brunson began to take notice.

Along in March, he was out of town for the better part of two weeks, trying a will case in Owosso. At the end of the first week, when he made a hurried trip to Detroit to find out how things were going in his office, his stenographer told him that a Mrs. Crusoe had called to see him twice. Brunson said

he was slightly disturbed; but this message was only one of about fifty, and he went back to Owosso the next day without thinking any more about it. As soon as the will case was over, he had to hop into another lawsuit in Detroit, then into something else. The result was, he more or less lost track of things, until one day, a month or two later, the school director telephoned him that Ralph was giving a recital at the settlement that night; perhaps he'd be interested in coming.

"How's he been doing?" Brunson asked, with more or less of a sensation of coming to.

"Better every day," said the director. "The best man we've got down here."

It turned out that the recital was given chiefly by Ralph's pupils; he played only once himself. But Brunson was simply astounded, he told me, by the change in him. It wasn't only that he was so wrapped up in his kids, and that his own playing actually had improved a good deal. He, himself, seemed so lit up, so genuinely happy. There was a certain air of stability about him, as if he had his feet on solid foundations. It seemed the experiment would turn out an astounding success, after all. Naturally, Brunson was simply delighted; he wanted to congratulate Ralph, but somehow or other, they missed connections in the crowd.

My clipping, it so happened, arrived next morning; and Brunson sent it back with the optimistic comment that had surprised me so much at the time.

There was one disturbing element, however. The director told Brunson that Crusoe had gradually been giving up his pay-pupils uptown, devoting more and more time to the settlement school—"he says this is where's he's needed"—until now, he had entirely severed connections with his conservatory.

"But, great Scott, how does he manage to live?"

The director didn't know.

Brunson, recalling this new phase of the situation next morning, after having mailed back the lady authoress's para-

graph to me, suddenly remembered also the two fruitless calls Lottie had made at the office. He thought he saw the connection now, and was more uneasy than ever. He would have to get hold of Ralph at once and see what could be done.

## XXI

THAT same afternoon, however, his stenographer 'phoned in that Mr. Crusoe was in the outer office waiting to see him.

Brunson told her to send Ralph in, and when the door opened, stood up, ready to offer his belated congratulations upon the recital's success. But when he laid eyes on his visitor, he realized that something appalling had happened. Crusoe was evidently trying to hold himself in check, not go entirely to pieces. He was repellently pale, his mouth hung open slackly, and Brunson could hardly understand what he said; there was a limpness about his body that seemed to prevent him from sitting up straight.

His first articulate word was "Klatt." Then Klatt and Lottie—something about those two.

Brunson was unspeakably shocked. By piecing out Ralph's incoherent story with his own inferences, he was able finally to get some adequate idea of what had happened.

Lottie had again been driven to despair, it developed, by her husband's improvidence. Their financial condition grew worse and worse as Ralph gave up his pay-pupils one after the other. Evidently there was in her a certain quality of prudent thrift that made being in debt, being bullyragged by collectors, especially abhorrent. Presently the bank started foreclosure proceedings against her; and to cap the climax, the oldest child, stepdaughter, came down with the flu. They already owed the doctor a three years' bill; he refused to come unless they paid something on account. The situation tightened up all around Lottie; her husband only became irritated when she spoke

about money—all he seemed interested in was the settlement school. There appeared to be but one way out for her: to start working again herself.

It was at this point that she thought of Brunson, called at his office twice to seek his aid, only to find that he was out of town. She couldn't wait for his return: the daughter was worse, and something had to be done. She remembered Eddie Klatt then. She was still afraid of him, didn't dare go to his office. But the next day she telephoned him and asked him to help her find work.

What Klatt's motives were still remains mystifying. Lord knows with all that money and his natural thick-skinned perseverance, he must have had his pick of women far more desirable than anæmic Lottie. But the fact stands. Perhaps the recollection of having twice gotten his bumps made the game exciting. Then there was his hatred for Ralph; not only because of their row in the office, or because his nephew had protected Lottie; but even more, because they were the exact opposites of each other and contempt was instinctive between them. Eddie was selfish and strong, Ralph unselfish and weak—that is, generally speaking. I can just imagine Eddie's enormous satisfaction at being able to injure Ralph.

Whatever his reasons, he stopped in to see Lottie that evening. The thing was easy because Crusoe necessarily did most of his teaching at night. Eddie sympathized with Lottie and gave her money to pay the doctor. He wanted her to go out riding with him that night, but the sick child gave her a good excuse to refuse him. A few nights later, the girl being better, he drove her to the drugstore for medicine and back home again.

"My God!" Crusoe moaned, in relating this part of the story. "When she told me that, I could have killed her!"

On the face of things, it did appear that Lottie ought to have known better; but apparently she had been beaten down to a point where nothing else

seemed to make much difference, if she could only get help for the sick child. Klatt was being decenter to her, I judge, than her husband was. On a subsequent drive, however, Klatt played his hand; and when she repulsed him—even Ralph believed her story on this point—he perpetrated a particularly brutal assault.

Very likely Lottie would never have told of the occurrence. She certainly had no love for Eddie, but she hated and feared her husband even more by this time. Probably the assault seemed only one more crushing blow to her. So she kept still, and though she admitted seeing Klatt again and taking more money from him, she gave him no further opportunities. But there was no ending the horror. Later on, she found she was pregnant. She went to Eddie with the news, she said; and he was openly suspicious, accused her of putting up a game on him.

Ralph hadn't observed any outward signs of her mental agony; but this very morning, still exalted with his success of the preceding night, he had received an anonymous letter, presumably from some neighborhood gossip, telling him his wife had been seen automobile riding—Eddie's license number was even given—and advising him to watch her.

"I took her by the throat," he told Brunson, "and choked the truth out of her."

Then he had rushed out to the paint works, half-crazed, not knowing just what he was going to do, but with a revolver in his pocket. Somehow he got through into Eddie's office; his uncle, he said, turned white and screeched: "I didn't do it! As God is my judge, I didn't do it!" Crusoe had a perfectly good chance to kill him on the spot, but somehow he couldn't do it; and Eddie, noting his indecision, suddenly jumped on him, took away the revolver, and had him kicked out of the place.

Then, after wandering about the streets a few hours, he had come to Brunson's office to find out what he could do.

## XXII

WHICH wasn't much.

Brunson couldn't very well tell him the truth: that the responsibility for the catastrophe lay primarily at his own door, that he had miserably failed in his first duty to his family—to support them properly; that such calamities are a part of poverty—that the women of the poor are fair prey.

Nor was there any very satisfactory legal redress in such cases, as Brunson explained it to me. Four courses were open to Crusoe. First, he could kill Klatt; but Brunson, as a lawyer, couldn't advise that; and anyway Ralph didn't have the guts. Secondly, he could ask for a criminal warrant. There were two strong objections to that: the public disgrace to himself and his family; and the fact that no jury would be likely to convict Klatt, in view of the circumstance that Lottie, a married woman, had deceived her husband and, though knowing the danger, had voluntarily gone riding with another man. She had accepted his money, too: that would look very bad. Thirdly, Ralph could bring a civil action for damages; but this was open to the same objections. Fourthly, he could settle the case out of court—and this was what Brunson recommended. Klatt would be even more anxious than Ralph to hush up the matter; he could be frightened into making liberal compensation.

"Compensation!" cried Crusoe. "He can't square things with me that way. I wouldn't touch a cent of his filthy money."

Brunson nevertheless called up Eddie, who refused to discuss the matter and referred further inquiries to his own counsel, a famous criminal lawyer. That was the beginning of a protracted poker game between the two attorneys, to determine how much Eddie could be bluffed into paying. He still maintained his innocence; he had simply felt sorry for Lottie and tried to help her. His property, moreover, was well under cover. Still, he was willing to pay something, just because he had been

stupid enough to let himself be decoyed into such a blackmailing trap.

Brunson finally jacked the opposition up to fifteen hundred dollars—not a very good settlement, but the best he could do with his hands as tied as they were. He advised his client to accept the offer.

"You mean you want me to sell my honor for a few miserable dollars?" Ralph acted as if he thought Brunson had betrayed him, perhaps gone over to the enemy.

Brunson, by this time, was heartily nauseated with the whole mess—there wasn't a cent in it for him, of course—and in addition was beginning to be irritated with Crusoe's whining attitude; but he explained the situation patiently. "It's better than nothing, and the only way you can get under Klatt's skin at all. Better take the money, pay up your debts and make a fresh start. Forget the whole business. Go back to your settlement kids: they need you." He thought of another argument. "Besides, you'll require some money to see your wife through childbirth."

It was an unfortunate suggestion. Crusoe went all to pieces, swore that the bastard would never be allowed to be born.

With that, Brunson's feelings were lacerated anew, more painfully than ever. What sympathy he had left for Ralph was transferred wholly to Lottie.

He saw her again the following day. Crusoe ended up by accepting the settlement, just as Brunson knew he would; and Lottie had to come to the office to join her husband in signing the receipts and releases. Brunson had never felt such acute heartache for anyone as he did for her. She was so passive, so utterly crushed, so stricken. To him she was the real victim of the disaster. He shuddered when he thought of the ordeal yet ahead for her—the victim of some bungling quack's criminal practises.

Brunson extended the papers toward her, and she seemed to hesitate.

"Sign your name!" Crusoe dragooned her savagely. "D'you hear—sign your



name!" He treated her as an object beneath contempt.

Lottie shrank a little, but Brunson caught the fraction of an expression she had in her eyes—a look of sullen, obstinate resentment that surprised him: he wouldn't have supposed she still had the power of feeling any emotion at all, even hatred.

## XXIII

BRUNSON is an amazing person. If I had been in his shoes, I should certainly have washed my hands of Crusoe from then on; I should have told myself he was way down and out, past all help. But after a few days, Brunson began to get over his abhorrence, began to devise ways and means of putting Ralph back on his feet. Clearly, the most promising expedient was the settlement school; if Ralph could only be made to feel he was really needed there, he might possibly find his way back to some measure of salvation. The family's financial problems could be taken care of somehow—if necessary, from Brunson's own pocket.

The director of the school, however, reported that nothing had been heard from Ralph since the night of the recital; and Brunson, girding up his loins again a little wearily, prepared to issue forth in search of the stray.

He was spared his pains by Ralph's sudden reappearance in the office. Brunson's heart sank, he admitted, when he laid eyes on his caller. Crusoe was more wild-eyed, more frantic, than ever; he really appeared insane.

He waived aside Brunson's references to the settlement school, and drew from his pocket an envelope containing a thick package of banknotes. This was what he called Klatt's blood-money—minus a couple of hundred dollars he had already spent. He wanted Brunson to return the money—in fact, practically ordered him to do so.

"Well," said the attorney, "would you mind explaining why?"

The disgrace of the thing, that was why. The idea of having compromised

his honor for money. And last night, Klatt had showed up at the house while Ralph was out.

Brunson simply couldn't believe it. Eddie wasn't that much of a fool—to run the risk of getting his fingers burned a second time.

"Are you sure?" he asked. "You didn't see him?"

Yes, Ralph had returned while Eddie was still there, and Eddie hadn't been frightened at all. "He thinks he's bought the right to play fast and loose with me—he's got me stopped. Wants to rub it in, see? Thinks I haven't the nerve to do anything to him." He pushed the envelope across the desk. "And I won't have, till I send back his beastly hush-money. God knows you had no right to make me take it!"

"Make you take it!" Brunson confesses that he lost his temper. He stood up and opened the door. "Now listen: I refuse absolutely to have anything more to do with the case. I'm through! If you choose to give back that money, you'll have to do it yourself."

Later, when he had had time to cool off, he felt sorry he had flared up; promised himself he would make one more effort to bring his friend back to sanity.

At his home that night, while he was in the very act of debating whether or not to drive out to the Crusoes' place, the telephone rang and he recognized Ralph's voice at the other end of the wire; very distinct, not at all maudlin.

"I just wanted to tell you I'm going to follow your advice and give the money back to Klatt myself," the voice announced. "Then I'm going to kill him." Crusoe laughed at that point, then rang off.

Brunson got into action rather quickly, everything considered. First he called up Klatt's house, hoping to be in time to give warning; but Eddie had just left, destination unknown. That information, at any rate, told the frantic Brunson where the encounter would probably occur. He telephoned police headquarters and gave the Crusoe ad-

dress, then set out in his machine, speeding recklessly across the city.

When he reached his destination, he found a crowd outside the house. Pushing his way through, he ran up the steps and into the interior. There was a dozen people standing in the parlor, among them a policeman, and two young chaps who turned out to be reporters.

"Patrolman Daniel Rourke," the policeman was saying to them. "R-o-u-r-k-e. Don't forget me, boys."

Brunson had no difficulty in getting the officer to talk. Looking through the glass panel of the front door, he had seen three people in the parlor, two men and a woman. He rang the bell and pounded at the door. At the interruption, one of the men—"this fellow Crusoe"—had pulled a gun and pointed it at the other. The woman, who had been standing a little to one side, suddenly threw herself upon the man with the gun, preventing him from using it. At the same time she screamed some warning to the other man.

"The other bird was standin' right here." Patrolman Rourke obligingly acted out the scene.

"You say she tried to save this other man?" Brunson gasped.

"Looked that way. I couldn't hear what she yelled."

Crusoe managed to pull the trigger once, but the bullet went wild. "Here's where it landed," said one of the reporters, pointing high up on a wall.

Just then Rourke had succeeded in smashing in the door. By the time he could pick himself up and rush into the parlor, the second man had disappeared, and Crusoe and the woman were still struggling together. Suddenly, he had broken loose.

Said Officer Rourke: "I heard him call her a dirty street-walker, and then he shot her. I tried to git to him, but

he run into the back room there and plugged himself in the mouth."

"You mean—dead?"

"Sure—both of them." The policeman apparently took pleasure in the complete success of the enterprise. "The other fella got away."

Brunson nodded mechanically. "Of course!"

He wasn't surprised in the slightest. Yes, Eddie, would escape scot free. . . .

Later, Brunson walked into the small bedroom at the rear of the house. Here also was a scene of busy animation. One of the reporters was rumaging through the bureau drawers in search of photographs. The undertaker had arrived promptly; already, before the curious stares of several onlookers, he was washing Lottie's body in a most businesslike way. She lay on the bed, looking much as she had in life—very white, very unobtrusive, very meek. Between her flaccid breasts, Brunson saw an extremely neat-looking little bullet-hole.

"Here's one!" the reporter announced with jubilation, and pulled forth a photograph of Ralph Edgel Crusoe—the same photograph that had decorated the Sunday music pages once upon a time, not so long ago—very temperamental and elegant in my dress suit.

Brunson was told that his friend's body was in the next room; but he left the house, he said, without going in to see it. The two children he caught a glimpse of, crying, in still another room.

\* \* \*

As for the plump lady authoress—all ladies, in fact, of both sexes, who ladle out noble nonsense to the young and unsophisticated—I say they ought to be dragged to the lethal chamber forthwith. Or worse punishment—muzzled for life, without benefit of typewriter.

(The End)



# Heart Disease

By Charles G. Shaw

## I

**W**OMAN measures happiness by the number of men that are in love with her. Man measures happiness by the number of times he has escaped falling in love.

## II

WHERE exists the man who, upon reviewing his terminated episodes d'amour, does not feel that he has been a complete and utter jackass?

## III

THE fellow of the ardent nod, of the merry optic, of the significant stare, seldom cabbages anything really of the first water. Woman is primarily impressed by indifference. The higher up the scale, the more is she attracted by the man who practically ignores her. Thus it is only the imitation, the tenth-rater, the admitted failure, that is ever actually ensnared by the cryptic wink.

## IV

PARADOXICALLY enough, love's obstacles are often the very factors that hold romance together—jealousy, spite, envy. As long as a woman remains jealous, spiteful or envious of a man he may rest assured that she is still interested in him.

## V

BEWARE of the woman who laughs at the jest at her expense.

## VI

THE happiest woman in the world is the one who never takes a man seriously, just as the happiest man in the world is the one who never takes himself seriously.

## VII

How often is love's labor wasted! A man cudgels his brains in order to fathom the meanings of a woman's manoeuvres when nine times out of ten they are wholly meaningless.

## VIII

MANY are the men who will successfully withstand a woman's hatred, scorn, bitterness, anger, callousness. . . . But where exists the fellow who is able to combat her ridicule?

## IX

A MAN'S relations with a woman are of three distinct phases: winning her, holding her, and escaping from her. In the first he is impelled by anticipation, in the second by vanity, in the third by regret.

## X

MAN'S greatest problem is that of forgetting himself. Woman's greatest problem is that of deceiving herself.

## XI

A WOMAN, in the throes of amour, may be elated, depressed, jealous, gay, surreptitious, sympathetic, selfish or tender. But happy? Never!

## XII

How sad a thing it is that the woman of great beauty is almost invariably a complete numskull. While it is exquisite to gaze at her, the spell suddenly snaps the minute she opens her mouth. It is as if, in cloistered twilight, an organ recital of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony were broken in upon by a West Fifty-third street jazz orchestra playing, "When the Moon Shines on the Gin, Gin, Ginny Shore."

thoroughly and when she scarcely knows him at all.

## XIV

It is an unwillingness to take chances that almost always induces a man to hurl himself at a woman's feet and implore that she be his. In short, he proposes, not because he really wishes to marry her, but for fear that someone else will capture her if he doesn't propose.

## XIII

A WOMAN tells her secrets to a man on two occasions: when she knows him

## XV

SHE who hesitates is won.



## Were It Not That Beauty Comes

*By R. Lynn Riggs*

I WOULD buy beauty by the singing yard  
 Like a gay cloth in a bright bazaar,  
 Or seek it in the cold springs where the willows guard,  
 Or in the slight sanctity of a dim star—

I would have beauty out of tolling bells,  
 Crying out for sorrow, or alive with mirth,  
 Or in the sky that holds a huge secret in its hive,  
 Or in the close motherhood of earth—

I would look for beauty morning, noon, and night,  
 In a sweet peace, or in crowded daily wars—  
 Were it not that beauty comes in a rush of rainbow light  
 To shower me confusedly with stars.



WHEN a man is extremely popular, there are reasons. When a woman is extremely popular, there are rumors.



# The Son of Sally-Anne

By George Kent Favrot, Jr.

## I

RUDOLPH could only just remember when he first became ashamed of his origin. In his early childhood he had taken things for granted. He had rather enjoyed the deference shown him as the offspring of Sally-Anne, or, to be more exact, of Sally. Circus people are kindly and are, moreover, prone to look upon freaks with the calm of long association.

As long as his world was limited strictly to the circus he had no feeling about it. The change dated from the year which he spent with his grandparents in North Carolina. For Rudolph had grandparents just like anybody else and his grandparents were respectable, God-fearing folks in a prosperous little North Carolina town.

He was sent to North Carolina in his tenth year. Sally-Anne came to one of their abrupt decisions about the boy and he was packed off forthwith. Blatski had been giving him his morning lesson in geography and had suddenly proclaimed that Rudolph was an unusually bright boy. The education which he had picked up as the petted favorite of the circus performers was far superior to that of the average ten-year-old boy. La Vendome, the tight-rope performer, had taught him a bit of French and he had further perfected that language during their stay in Paris two years before. He had got a smattering of German from the Mullers, who did the trapeze act. Other circus notables had contributed their quota.

Indeed, he had been surrounded since infancy with the cultures of many countries. As he was the only child in the

group these people vied with each other in teaching him. He learned easily. The only thing he could not learn was anything pertaining to the circus. After his first lesson in gymnastics Blatski had told Sally-Anne that he was no good for an acrobat. His body was hopelessly inflexible. Likewise the trapeze made him dizzy and he cried to be taken down, a proceeding which excited something like contempt in his friends. And despite his intellectual bent he had shown no talent for the art of the clown. But everything else he learned with great rapidity. Blatski, who was a man of parts, pronounced him an unusually bright youngster.

"He should be sent to school," said Blatski.

"He shall be—," said Sally.

"—at once," finished Anne.

Sally-Anne had a great respect for book learning. They had come out of North Carolina with nothing but their jovial good humor and their peculiar conformation of body to recommend them. Since then, like the Bourbons, they had learned nothing and forgotten nothing. True, they had shown wonderful adaptability in picking up the Bohemian ways of the circus, but they may have brought a predisposition to that with them from North Carolina. But of education they had picked up nothing. So of course their respect for education was enormous.

It pleased them very much to think that their son—Sally shared the boy with her Siamese sister as she did so much else—had brains. When Blatski suggested school they at once thought of their parents, who had in their own youth, so it seemed to them, shown a

dogged determination in this very matter. It was only the teacher's attitude which had deterred them and it was the teacher's attitude which had proved the last straw which landed them in the circus. Yes, Pa and Ma were strong for education. The boy was sent off to North Carolina at once. When he left, the bearded lady kissed him and her beard was wet with tears. The midgets embraced him about the waist and chirped not to be forgotten. The more orthodox performers gave him presents and promised to write.

His first encounter with his grandparents was something of a shock. He had always looked upon himself as a normal and exceedingly lucky little boy. But Grandpa and Grandma Duggins evidently did not think so. The old man looked at him pityingly, while Grandma, after giving him a number of convulsive kisses, frankly threw her apron over her head and wept. Rudolph wept too, although he did not then know what he was weeping about. Later in the day he caught the phrase "poor little unfortunate" and it stuck in his memory.

School was worse. He soon discovered that all of the children knew about Sally-Anne from their parents. Indeed, all of Bloomingville was eternally conscious of Sally-Anne despite their long absence. And the children soon made it plain that Sally-Anne were nothing to be proud of. At first they stood off and looked at him. Then, a bolder spirit forging the way, they gathered around him and asked him questions.

At recess he was always the centre of a little group. They would ply him with questions and then, just when he was beginning to feel at home, the group would break up into smaller groups, leaving him alone. And in the school-room they would look at him. It was at this time that he first became conscious of people looking at him. He never lost that consciousness afterward. And, as is always the case, he gradually began to feel that people were looking at him when they were not.

That year of school was hell. It took him some time to realize the full peculiarity of Sally-Anne and how fully he shared it, but it did not take him long to realize that he was an outcast in Bloomingville; a tolerated outcast, one to whom matrons felt it incumbent that they should be kind, but an outcast none the less. And Grandpa and Grandma were no better. They were very kind, but it was a kindness mixed with tears. They, too, had that way of looking at him. One of the things which bewildered him most was that they never mentioned Sally-Anne. Whenever he mentioned them or the circus the old people would suddenly become embarrassed and change the subject. He was glad when the school year ended and he went back to the circus. He made up his mind then that he would not return for the next term.

## II

AND he never did.

Sally-Anne were indulgent and were glad to have him back. But he found the circus changed. Now it was a circus, while before it had been a little world completely surrounded by audience. He was conscious now that he was peculiar. He found that all circus people were looked upon as peculiar by the audience-world and that he was pre-eminently peculiar by reason of being the son of the freakiest of all freaks. His consciousness of strange glances increased. He began to suspect the circus people of looking at him queerly.

One of Sally-Anne's foibles which caused him acute anguish now was that of introducing him to their audience. When they took their place in the side-show tent they liked to have him beside them, insisted on it. Then, when the people passing through stopped to chat, as they always did, Sally would say: "This is my little son," and her eyes would twinkle at them, saying: "Don't you wish you knew all about it?" While facing another crowd in the other direction Anne would twinkle the same Rabelaisian thought.

Rudolph was becoming acquainted with ideas of sex about this time and he knew that the smirks which the audience gave when this point was reached were sex-smirks. It was in this way that he began to speculate as to his birth. It added greatly to his misery. Sally always contended that his father had been a gentleman and Anne corroborated her statement. Many people did not believe them, despite the fact that the testimony of two witnesses is valid even in a law court. It was perhaps this scepticism which prevented Sally-Anne from giving any further details. When Rudolph grew old enough to ask questions, polite questions, about his father, Sally-Anne would grow quite angry and Sally would say:

"Your father was a gentleman."

"A gentleman to be proud of," Anne would add.

And Rudolph, obscurely abashed, would never press the point.

He was now growing into a moody adolescence. He continued to study, for he loved books, and he continued to learn from his circus companions, but the old intimacy was gone. He felt uncomfortable when the conversation veered from the topic at hand. When there was a silence he got up and walked away. Even Blatski, the urbane and sympathetic, no longer had his confidence.

Then came the second great change in his life. The circus was showing in a college town. It became known that a large part of the audience that afternoon would be college boys. The news reached Sally-Anne. "College? Young boys went to college. Rudolph was a young boy. He should go to college. What college? This college." Sally-Anne's minds worked that way. They had always been ambitious for the boy and a college education seemed the fitting, the obvious thing.

So thus it was that Rudolph went to college. They left him there with a coach to brush up for the entrance examinations at the beginning of the next semester. But unfortunately the town paper got hold of it. Sally-Anne could

not visit the registrar's office themselves, because it would not do for them to show themselves free by appearing on the streets. But they made it very plain that *they* were sending him to college and that he was *their* son.

College was a repetition of Bloomingville on a grand scale. The torments were more subtle. The tormentee was more sensitive. He was stared at for a full semester before anyone spoke to him. Then a boy made a few quizzical advances. Others followed. But his college friendships never went any farther than halting questions, never quite to the point, and smiling reserves. He roomed alone. He sat alone in the classrooms. He was almost always alone on the campus. When he passed before a large group of boys lounging about the campus his knees would almost give way under him, so terrible was his self-consciousness. He could never bring himself to look at these groups, but he was always sure that they were staring at him. He got the name for being peculiar in his own right, a "nut."

His first vacation he decided to spend at a summer resort where he was not known. It was easy to convince Sally-Anne that he was going with a college friend and they were always liberal with money. It was there that he fell in love.

The girl was the type of sixteen-year-old beach comber which exists at all resorts. She noticed his shy glances and encouraged the boys in her group to scrape up an acquaintance with him. Rudolph, at this time, was a good-looking fellow and there was something in his bashful, pleading gaze which appealed to women.

Things went well under her guidance, but just when the affair had progressed to the point where they were automatically paired off together on all beach parties, a boy from college appeared at the resort. It was a death knell to his hopes. He couldn't be sure that the boy had told, the boy was civil when they met, but he very soon began to feel that he was being stared at. It was

partly imaginary, but it was effective. He left early one morning without telling his idol good-bye. He had never even kissed her. After that he spent his summers with the circus.

Rudolph finished his college career with flying colors. He had a mind and an imagination. Furthermore, he had no resources save his books, so he studied very hard. The professors liked him. The curiosity of the scientific professors, particularly, was, he could feel, tempered with more mercy than the vulgar curiosity of the herd. They gave him high marks and he graduated with honors.

Sally-Anne received him back with open arms. He was passed from one pair of arms to the other several times. All of the circus people were glad to see him. In spite of his moody abstraction there was something about the slim, shy boy which made people like him. There was always a place in the circus for Sally-Anne's son. The manager considered them one of his great drawing cards and they did not hesitate to domineer.

So Rudolph stayed on. Frequently he never left the railroad carriage in which they lived for weeks at a time. He read a great deal. Sometimes he got out in a town and walked around, but he never spoke to anyone and the circus child's instinctive prejudice against the theater kept him from going there. His sensitive misery increased daily. He would lie awake at night for long periods of time, keeping himself awake by an effort of the will, so it would seem longer before the morrow and the coming of reality. In his bed at night, alone with his fancies, he seemed more at home, less miserable, than when he was up and about with people looking at him and wondering about him. He was held down by a kind of inertia of the will. He became incapable of any initiative.

### III

THIS continued for over a year after he left college. He frequently thought

of getting away, of changing his name (although the name Duggins meant nothing), but it remained a day dream. He would start off with a definite plan for making his escape, but before he had revolved it in his mind for very long it would become more grandiose and finally taper off completely into the realm of the abstract.

The change came by accident. He had got off the car one day and was strolling up and down the station platform, when he was accosted by a dapper, well-dressed stranger who asked him for a match. They continued to talk. The stranger discovered that Rudolph was intelligent and well educated. He further discovered that he was out of a job (so to speak).

"Well, I'll tell you what I'll do, young fellow," he said, "I'm traveling for the Transiker Boot and Shoe Company. Ever hear of them?"

Rudolph said vaguely that he had.

"Well, now, I'll tell you what. I'm going in tonight. The concern is located in Detroit. Does your show make Detroit?"

"Yes, next week," said Rudolph.

"Well, I'm going in tonight. Now I'll speak to the boss about you and he might find something for you. Understand, I don't promise anything. Depends on whether he needs a man. But I'll put in a word for you."

"What kind of work?" said Rudolph.

"Drummer. On the road."

The stranger took Rudolph's name and gave him the address of the firm and the name of the manager. When they parted Rudolph was more excited than he had ever been in his life before.

Rudolph said nothing to Sally-Anne about the matter, for he was afraid that when the time came he would not be able to screw up his courage to the point of going to see the manager. Indeed, he spent half a day in front of the office building before he went in. But he finally did go in and he got the job.

Then began a new life. As a drummer he was not quite a success, but his



failure was not glaring enough for him to lose his job. He spent two years with the Transiker Boot and Shoe Company.

At first he reveled in his freedom, in being anonymous. As he went about his daily routine he had the feeling that he was wearing an invisible cloak, that people could not see him as he really was. It was a delicious feeling. To do the things which other people did, commonplace things, had the tang of strange delights. To go to the movies was a thrill. To exchange a few words with the girl behind the cigar stand in his hotel was an adventure. It was new and delightful to be a normal person.

But these joys began to pall. He found solace in a new mental attitude. The invisible cloak feeling gave place to that of a prince incognito. He began to relish being unknown as something which he was putting over on the people about him. They didn't know who he was, and therein lay a chuckle. He began to look back upon the life of the circus with more tolerance. It had been colorful. Sometimes at night he would wake up and remember scenes of his past. He would hear the tom-tom beat of the bass drum in the side-show and the suggestive whine of the reed instruments and then Sally's voice, the good-natured voice one hears in a negro church, singing:

"She ne-ever had been to the ci-ty. . . ."

And the voice of Anne echoing:

". . . Through the mid-wa-ay she had never roamed."

He would turn over on his pillow with a shudder. But there was something heart-warming in the thought, nevertheless.

His life became hideously monotonous. The commonplace round of the drummer was a stark horror. It was drab. He was free, but his freedom lacked tang. His fellow drummers were his equals neither in education nor in experience. Their conversation was infinitely stupid. Their jokes were fully

as obscene as those of the circus and not so funny. The business did not interest him at all.

But in this welter of the commonplace he did not stand out. His long habit of reserve made it impossible for him to assert himself very aggressively and his superiority did not shine of itself. He was no longer a person of importance. No one looked at him now. People listened to him half-heartedly when he spoke. He never stayed in one place long enough to make acquaintances. In the looks which had followed him in the old days there had been something that was obnoxious, but there had also been interest. They had wanted to know what *he* was doing, what *he* was thinking. To the circus people he had been, as Sally-Anne's son, a person of importance. To the laity there had been about him the glamor of the bizarre. He had been someone to be noticed under any circumstances. And now he was a complete nonentity. When once a man has been beyond the pale, has known what it is to be different from other people and therefore superior to them, not governed by their standards, he can never be a common mortal again. Rudolph couldn't. His freedom had come too late.

At last he decided to reveal his identity to someone and see once again that look of wonder and question. He chose a companion in a Pullman smoker. He led up to it gradually, speaking of past histories, childhoods, etc. At last he said:

"I am the son of Sally, one of the Siamese twins. In Rinkton's and Rugger's Circus. You've heard of them, haven't you? Sally-Anne?"

His companion was a glossy, over-groomed Jew, traveling for corsets.

"Sally-Anne?" he said. "Oh, yes, sure. You're their son, eh? Well, well."

He gave Rudolph the questioning look, but there was more contempt in it than in the old looks. Soon after, he began to look through his order book and then came the station where he got off. Rudolph never saw him again.

## IV

AND so it came that Rudolph went back to the circus. He found a warm welcome. He was immediately given a place in the business office and he found his niche in the circus life.

The years passed. His reserve began to fall away. He became rather famous for his stinging wit. He always had a little group around him now, depraved young fellows of the kind who hang around circus tents, and they looked upon him with the old curious gaze and with something new of admiration. He could be seen hanging around between tents when he was not working, with his gang about him. Rudolph would tell a story and then the gang would burst into convulsive sniggers. He was no longer afraid of life. Now he met it with a cynical calm which rather awed his fellows. He could go just a little farther than they in discussing the kind of things which had formerly terrified him.

His looks were leaving him though. He had lost that wistful look and it had been replaced by something like a per-

manent leer. He was losing his hair, too.

His former self-consciousness was replaced by a brazen assurance. He was conscious of the stares of the multitude now, but they were no longer unpleasant. In fact, it gave him a definite feeling of pleasure to walk up to the door of the side-show, the yokels staring, nod pleasantly to Jeff, the ticket man, and stroll languidly in without paying.

And inside the tent it tickled his fancy to josh with Sally-Anne while the people strolled past. When the music would start up the hoochy-koochy and Sally-Anne would begin to sway rhythmically to and fro, as was her custom, he would call out:

"Have a dance with me, Mother?"

Then Sally would beam at her offspring and reply:

"Get along with you, you big lum-mux," while Anne would chime in with a raucous "Haw, haw, haw."

That always made the spectators titter and look at each other. Rudolph had something of the artist in him and he was sensitive to atmospheres.



## The Fish

By *Louis T. Barnes*

THE goldfish said:  
 "The world is small,  
 I know, because  
 I've seen it all."



# Répétition Générale

By George Jean Nathan and H. L. Mencken

## § 1

**T**he Fight for Liberty.—In 1775 the American people began their great struggle for liberty. One hundred and forty-seven years later they are still at it.

## § 2

*Anti-Social Acts.*—The fact that a Prohibition enforcement officer is universally regarded in America as a licensed blackmailer and scoundrel, even when he shows all the outward signs of integrity, is due to a sound instinct in the common people. They sense the plain fact that his business is unescapably anti-social—that it is, in fact, quite as anti-social as that of the porch-climber, pickpocket or private detective. Decorating him with a badge and a pad of blank warrants doesn't change him in the slightest. He is intrinsically a criminal, and before many moons have waxed and waned mob justice will begin to deal with him as such.

## § 3

*No. 2989.*—A woman's greatest love is reserved for that man whose tastes and manners are most in key, and whose philosophy and worldly conduct are least in key, with her own.

## § 4

*Idealism.*—An idealist is one who seeks to improve the sounds of a violin by denying that they are produced by the friction of a horse's tail upon the intestines of a sheep. A materialist is one who enjoys the fiddling while the idealist is arguing for his denial.

## § 5

*Portrait of an American.*—A lover of liquor, a gay Lothario with ever an eye for a pretty girl—white or black, a believer in aristocracy and slavery, a hater of the mob, a gourmet, a virtuoso of amour, the life of the party, a good dancer, a fellow of precise taste in clothes, an admirer of fine art with no regard to its morals. . . . You smile at the viciously satirical picture? I give you its name: The Father of His Country, George Washington.

## § 6

*Business Opportunity.*—The Oklahoma oil-stock business, I hear, is in a low state: the boobs have grown suspicious in that direction, and no longer bite as of yore. But this certainly doesn't prove that they have lost appetite; it merely proves that they tire of the bait. They still have plenty of money and are eager to get rid of it; a new fly would pull them in by the thousand. Better yet, an old fly newly painted. I suggest to the *entrepreneurs* of the land that the perpetual-motion machine deserves another trial. It is now at least thirty years since the country mortgage sharks, retired pastors and starving widows last bought stock in it. Why not trot it out again, and give it another trial? I believe that \$1,000,000 worth of stock could be sold in Kansas alone before the post office inspectors closed in on the enterprise.

The belief in such frauds is one of the dearest faiths of the American people. They cherish it as they cherish their conviction that Darwin was a scoundrel and that the Kaiser started

the war. It is an integral part of their lofty and incurable idealism.

## § 7

*Time Versus Achievement.*—Civilization and nature are in ceaseless conspiracy against the man bent seriously upon achievement. Consider the time they compel him to dissipate profitlessly, the hundred and one barriers they interpose between his goal and the short span of life that is his wherein to reach it. Aside from the requirements of nature—the eight hours of sleep, the considerable periods spent in eating his three sustaining daily meals, the occasional incapacitating illness or, more frequently, the spiritual dumps that make work impossible—there are the countless little things ordained by civilization to consume his precious minutes with the jaws of so many voracious wolves: an hour in the mornings spent in bathing, shaving and dressing, and approximately the same amount of time spent similarly in the evenings; the time wasted in getting the hair cut and in looking after the finger-nails; the necessity for washing the hands a half-dozen times between morning and evening; the social amenities on the street, over the telephone, and elsewhere—these are only a few instances. What is left beyond these in the day's cycle? Perhaps six calm, untroubled, free hours for one life's work. Six hours for work. Eighteen wasted.

## § 8

*Psychic Crime.*—Dispatch from Baltimore in the newspapers of June 15 last:

Because he is alleged to have said that "President Harding ought to be shot because he never did me any good," Frank S. Simpson, 49 years old, was arrested and locked up today.

In brief, a revival of the old felony of "imagining the King's death."

## § 9

*Imitators.*—Of all the novelists now in practice in the Republic, Sherwood

Anderson seems to have the largest number of imitators. Never a day goes by that I do not receive at least one manuscript that leans heavily and clumsily upon "Winesburg, Ohio." The cause of this, I dare say, lies in the fact that it is easy to counterfeit his external manner—that his impressionism is grateful to incompetents who have nothing to say. Cabell, with his manner of a lapidary, stands at the other extreme, and so he is seldom imitated. I say seldom; perhaps I should say never. Dreiser has a good many followers, and Hergesheimer has begun to develop them, but Cabell has absolutely none. Of all the younger men Scott Fitzgerald is the most assiduously imitated; the buzzards already feast upon his empty tomato-cans as they lately feasted upon those of Ring Lardner and Montague Glass.

## § 10

*The Question of Freedom.*—A man talks a great deal of his love and desire for perfect freedom, yet the truth is that he actually cares much less for perfect freedom than he believes. Given perfect freedom, he would still continue volitionally to impose upon himself most of the physical and mental restrictions that he does at present. It is a rare man who enjoys an absolutely untrammelled existence. Almost every man is a willing slave to those emotions, thoughts, conventions and personal habits that in combination stake out the boundary lines of his freedom. The greatest foe of freedom is man's own nature. He does not want absolute autonomy; he wants, in at least some degree, to be ruled and protected—if not by a king, by a woman; if not by a woman, by his traditional and satisfactory comforts; if not by his traditional and satisfactory comforts, by the love or fear of God.

## § 11

*Conspiracies.*—They speak of the conspiracy of silence by effectual way of killing off a man. There is a surer

way. It is the conspiracy of excessive praise.

## § 12

*Homo Boobiens.*—All schemes to save the boobery from exploitation are bound to fail. If the men who now squeeze money out of them were overthrown tomorrow they would succumb at once to men who sought to squeeze power and glory out of them. Their history is simply a history of successive victimizations. They are intelligent enough to suffer and to revolt, but not intelligent enough to escape. They are eternally in the position of a man who, at great cost and by dint of heroic efforts, gets himself a jug of Sherwood rye, and then finds, when he uncorks it, that it is a compound of pepper, prune juice and wood alcohol.

## § 13

*Constructive Criticism.*—(1) An exponent of constructive criticism: Hamilton Wright Mabie. (2) An exponent of destructive criticism: Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche.

## § 14

*In Defense of Harvard.*—Harvard has good ethical precedent and justification for barring Jews. Hasn't Columbia for the last ten years apparently barred Christians?

## § 15

*Kultur in the South; Canto I.*—Extract from an article in the *Baptist Courier*, of Greenville, S. C., by the Rev. Dr. Robert G. Lee:

As great as was the triumph of Beethoven in the realm of music, as great as were the achievements of Angelo in the world of Arts, just so great or even greater were the achievements of Samuel A. Derieux in the world of literature . . . Along with Hawthorne for psychological powers; along with Lanier for beauty of diction; along with Scton for depth of pathos; along with Irving for aptness of description; along with the Brownings for purity of thought—along with the mightiest in the use of the pen will Samuel A. Derieux's name stand till writing shall cease to be and till of the making of books there is an end.

## § 16

*Presidents and Kings.*—Many centuries England's junior, it remains that the United States has in its comparatively short career as a nation actually produced more first-rate men as President than England has produced as King. Compare the great Kings of English history with these: George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Andrew Jackson, Abraham Lincoln, Jefferson Davis, Ulysses S. Grant, and Grover Cleveland.

## § 17

*Prognosis.*—A friend who has a boy of fourteen years lately asked me what I'd make of the youngster if he were mine. My reply was simple: I'd take him out into the backyard and humanely shoot him. The United States is surely no place for bringing up an intelligent and sensitive boy: he'll be heartily ashamed of his country before he is twenty-one, and the chances are that he'll be ashamed of his father too. My friend, however, vetoed assassination on legal and theological grounds. I then advised him to make a thief of his son—i.e., a good business man. I see no future in the arts and professions among us. The artist, if he is competent and honest, almost starves, and, honest or dishonest, he is an object of public aversion, and in a few more years he will probably be a criminal. As for the professions, what do they offer? The lawyer and the clergyman are simply valets to the business man; the pedagogue blacks his shoes in the universities; the soldier collects his bad bills; even the physician is dependent on him for education and support. In America, indeed, practically all the sciences are dependent upon the generosity of wealthy cads. Even to be a professor of Sanskrit one must first find a cold-cream manufacturer willing to found a chair. The government takes no interest in such matters, and the public, when it thinks of them at all, thinks of them as immoral.

## § 18

*Lincoln.*—The eminently successful pragmatist philosophy of Abraham Lincoln was simply this: Be complex in politics, incomplex with politicians.

## § 19

*A Corporation.*—Some time ago, being hauled across the state of New Jersey at sixty miles an hour by the Pennsylvania Railroad, I tired of the foul miasmas of the smoking-room and went out upon the back-platform of the last Pullman to chew a cigar in peace. It was perhaps the three hundredth or four hundredth time that I had traveled thus across that great republic of bootleggers and morons, but it was the first time that I had ever viewed it from the end of the train. At once I got a considerable surprise. That surprise resided in the discovery that the track upon which the train ran was not flat and straight, as I had always supposed, but extremely sinuous—that, in fact, we had just swung 'round a very sharp curve and were mounting a long hill leading up to a bridge. It took me ten miles to take in the truth. Here I had been traveling on the Pennsylvania Railroad for years and years, never conscious of the slightest curve or bump between Philadelphia and New York—and here there unrolled before me a path full of parabolas and epicycloids, and mounting hills and dipping into valleys!

The discovery set me to meditating upon the virtues of the engineers who built the Pennsylvania Railroad as it stands today—a set of men obviously full of professional competence of a very high and rare order. Their names I do not know, or I'd spread them upon the minutes—but consider what they have done! Over a state that is not flat at all, as I formerly assumed, but broken up by all the usual hills, rivers, creeks, ravines and soft spots, they have laid a passenger track that is so cunningly designed and so securely set that a train of Pullmans weighing a thousand tons or more may be

dragged across it at a mile a minute without the passengers being conscious of a single heave or jolt! Think of the meticulous care that must have gone into some of the curves! An error of an inch, and there would have been flop enough to upset every plate of soup in the dining-car and knock down every flapper stealing a smoke in the women's washroom. An error of two inches, and there might have been an occasional Pullman in the ditch. But no error was made. The track, as it stands, is perfect, and it seems to be as solid as the skull of a Congressman.

I have traveled on a great many railroads at home and abroad, but I can't recall any that gives as good service, day in and day out, as the Pennsylvania. Certainly none of the great European roads comes within miles of it, save in the single respect that the victualing service is better. But here the inferiority of the Pennsylvania is national rather than individual; it is almost impossible, on an American Pullman, to get a decent meal; the worst government road in France or Germany serves better. In all other ways the Pennsylvania is infinitely ahead of any European railroad that I know or have ever heard of. Its trains are more comfortable, there is less crowding on them, and they make and keep better time. One day last winter there was a severe storm in the region of Washington, and street traffic was so far suspended in Baltimore that I had to go to the Pennsylvania station in a colored undertaker's dead-wagon: no automobile could navigate the streets. But when I got to the station at last one of the Pennsylvania's ordinary express-trains left precisely on time, and, what is more, it reached New York precisely on time. Once I had got aboard, the only signs of the storm that I encountered were purely visual. I saw Fords snowbound at every station and yokels floundering heroically through huge drifts, but the train I was on slambanged through the country as usual, and it was as warm and comfortable as usual, and I had

my bad luncheon and my snooze afterward as usual.

Many such experiences have convinced me that the Pennsylvania is an institution of some merit—that, as institutions go in the Republic, it deserves more respect and politeness than most. Nevertheless, it seems to be usually mentioned in the newspapers in terms of opprobrium. What one hears of it is that its higher officers have lately bought another Legislature in Pennsylvania, or that they have offended God by cutting down the wages of their conductors from \$20 a day to \$19.66. It is, in fact, a favorite butt of Liberals and forward-lookers of all varieties, and I have even encountered the argument that it is chiefly, if not solely, responsible for the fact that the average Pennsylvania politician is a scoundrel and the average Pennsylvania non-politician one who wishes heartily that he was a politician. In all this moral abuse, I regret to say, I take no stock. If the officials of the Pennsyl-

vania Railroad keep the politicians of Pennsylvania in their pay, as seems to be the case, then you may be sure that they do not do it voluntarily. They do it because they have to do it—because if they didn't they would be so vastly harassed that it would be impossible for them to attend to their proper job of running their railroad. It is my belief that their primary business and interest is simply to run that railroad; what is more, that they take a great professional pride in that business, and are a bit cocky because they carry it on so much better than any other group of railroad officials carries it on. Well, they are entitled to that vanity. In a country where inefficiency is the rule of life and bluster the national religion, they discharge a large and difficult task with tremendous competence, and even with a dash of manner. I am therefore delighted to give them this free reading notice, and to promise them a continuance of my cash patronage, such as it is.



## Song Before Silence

*By Leonora Speyer*

WE were two sullen singers  
 Hoarders of lovely cries,  
 Our echoes took us muttering there  
 And bound us to the skies.

We were two dreaming toilers,  
 Dull eyes on duller tools,  
 Our own dreams caught us unaware  
 And made of us their fools.

We were two paths unventured,  
 Two fires no hearths to warm,  
 We were blind eagles on the air  
 Whose wings touched in a storm.



# Frustration

By Hartley H. Hepler

AS the last exquisite notes of Elman's final encore died away in faint, clear harmonics almost too delicate for human ears, there was a rustle of skirts and a shuffling of feet as the audience began to file out.

One woman had failed to rise with the rest, and presently she raised a rapt, exalted face. Her eyes were luminous with unshed tears.

The man next to her had also remained seated, and now turned to her.

"Pardon me," he said, "but you too are one of us?"

"No," she said humbly, "I am only a listener, but an appreciative one. What was that he just played?"

"Beethoven's Minuet in G," was the reply.

"You are a musician, of course?" she questioned.

"For many years," he replied proudly.

She glanced quickly at the cameo-like profile, the mass of dark hair, the slender nervous fingers. What a man! With sharply beating heart she whispered:

"I am mad, I know, but music is my life. Do not think I am bold. I have dreamed of a man like you. Will you come to see me? Will you come and play for me?"

His face hardened.

"It is impossible," he said! "you know not what you are asking."

"Do not say that," she protested. "I know that I am unconventional—that I ask much, but I promise that you will not regret doing this."

"It is out of the question," he repeated shortly, "My bull fiddle is too difficult to carry about."



## Song

By Luis Muñoz Marin

- O SWEET as rose-apple,  
Restful as laurel shade;  
O magic as a mist of birch trees is;  
O straight and strange and deep-odoured like the pine!  
*(I walked today in the forest, my love, my love;  
I walked today in your heart.)*





# The Superior Air

By Carter Brooke Jones

## I

AS Gerber passed the shooting gallery the girl who presided there gave him the usual smile. She thus invited all glancing her way to have a try at the clay bull's-eyes, birds and moving ducks. Gerber had passed often, and so was favored with a more intimate smile. As he sauntered by he gave a slight smile in return—not condescending, but half pitying.

She was pretty in a coarse way. Something about her frank effort to ingratiate herself with men—any man, every man who would spend a quarter at the targets—repelled him. With a shudder he put her out of his mind.

In the next block he met Delova, the State Assemblyman from the foreign quarter. Delova greeted him cordially, as Delova greeted every one. Gerber spoke pleasantly, but not effusively.

"Look me up," said Delova, by way of parting.

## II

GERBER had been an architect, but no one in the foreign quarter knew that. It was known only that he had been something. That was clear: it was written somewhere in his worried features, it clung to his shabby brown suit. He never talked of himself, but that was unnecessary. One divined that he did not belong to the quarter and had not come as a disciple of the arts seeking novelty, but lived there because it was cheap.

The man did not hold himself  
S. S.—Oct.—4

aloof—quite the contrary—yet a superior air, some subtle meaning, distinguished him. There is a marked difference between a superior air and an air of superiority. The latter is a snobbish attitude, provoking instinctive dislike. The superior air, on the other hand, is not an intrusive assumption of personal grandeur, and therefore does not inspire wrath. It is, rather, something that can't be helped, probably a recollection, often subconscious, of greater comfort and freedom, of less worry and ugliness.

Had Gerber displayed an air of superiority, the tradespeople, the real residents of the quarter—the transients didn't count—would have dismissed him with shrugs of disgust. Since he was guilty only of a superior air, of which he himself obviously was ignorant, he was respected, even admired. It was realized that he was down on his luck, that his funds were low, but that, in the eyes of the quarter, was nothing for or against him.

He was silent much of the time. When he talked it was in the slangy, intimate way of the others. He was careful not to play with phrases, to seem to flaunt his education in the faces of the bartenders, waiters, grocers and policemen who formed the nucleus of the district. They, of course, lived more smoothly than he, for they had their homes, whatever the degree of tranquillity such homes afforded, while he was a lodger in one of those drab, seamy hotels that shelter at low cost the men that drift into a seaport from every port of the world. He said so little that it may be they wondered sometimes why

he impressed them. But he was an intelligent listener, and men like that flattering patience because it is so rare.

A sort of abstracted melancholy brooded over Gerber. It was not the conscious self-pity that colors the pose of many men who have known better days—the guise that after three drinks reaches out lachrymously for sympathy. It was something more vague, like a mask of placidity worn for a tragic part.

In those days if you had undertaken to cross-examine Gerber you would have learned nothing. Asked, occasionally, where he came from, why, and what his plans were, he had a way of saying carelessly, "Oh, I've done a little of everything. I'm just taking things easy, looking around. Don't know what I'll do next. A man has all sorts of experiences. It's just as well, huh? Gives him variety."

You might have kept on prodding him, but you were wasting your time. He would continue to answer evasively or change the topic.

He drank a good deal. The raw wine the Italians sold seemed to agree with him. Doubtless it was a taste he had acquired rambling over the Continent in his youth. The execrable whiskey made in unsanitary stills gradually sapped something in him, some quality of energy that had abounded when he came to the quarter, but even that didn't affect his demeanor particularly. One never knew whether he was drunk or sober, or in some degree between the two, for he was always much the same. He would stand, sometimes for an hour or two, at one of the French or Italian bars, talking rarely, wrapped in an impenetrable haze of musing.

Other than the people he met casually in the eating and drinking places he had no associates. So, strictly speaking, he had no friends, for the bartenders he knew as Pietro or Emile or Jim, the customers he

called George or Bill, he hardly knew. They knew him less. No one visited his room. He never walked into a bar with acquaintances from other sections of the city. Yet he was not quite a part of the quarter.

He had no occupation except to drift through the hours. He never seemed to leave the quarter. He had money enough to maintain for a while, but not indefinitely, his amorphous existence. His detachment was perfect: he was a mysterious shadow pertaining to some other plane, but destined to haunt this locality and accepting his fate gracefully.

### III

THE quarter Gerber had seized as an expedient. He wanted to live cheaply. Furthermore, he wanted plenty to drink. He must forget—what? Well, things in general. The quarter served these purposes.

The first two weeks or so he was charmed. The narrow streets with their rows of tiny shops and their polyglot speech reminded him of the Continent, brought back poignant moods of youth. It was incredible that this Old World segment could thrive within the efficient confines of an American city.

Yet the charm passed. He didn't quite know why. He told himself he had grown old, unromantic, what his countrymen called normal. He no longer took pleasure in waiting interminably for the French shopkeepers to wrap packages for him, feeling that he was back in La Rochelle or Langres. It merely irritated him. A few artists of one sort or another, most of them hopelessly mediocre, lived in the quarter, and murmured disconsolately of "the good old days," when, they said, there was real atmosphere. Society folk patronized the night life in their desperate efforts to be amused. Neither element interested Gerber.

He began to see it as a slum where one could stay so comfortably drunk that one forgot the dirt that hung thick

over everything, the offending odors, the uncouth men, the shapeless women and grimy children. And so, whatever his disgust, he had no thought of leaving.

His hotel had been selected because it was cleaner than the rest he had inspected. He soon hated it. The halls had red carpets, worn to shreds, and at night dim red lights. Men spat on the walls. On Saturday nights all the guests—Spaniards, Frenchmen, Italians and Filipinos—came in noisily, nauseatingly drunk. Gerber heard fights that unnerved him, and women's shrill laughter that touched as with a sharp pain the esthetic part of him.

He had come to despise the quarter.

#### IV

GERBER had had four or five drinks and no food recently. He moved in a benevolent glow. Passing the shooting gallery he stopped with a sudden thought. What if the girl, with her coarse comeliness, was repulsive to him? It wouldn't hurt him to give her a quarter occasionally. Probably she had a hard time making a go of it.

He walked up and took a loaded rifle from her outstretched hand.

"I can't hit a thing," he explained, "but I'm willing to try."

"I was sure you'd drop in some-time," she laughed. "It's good exercise, this. You'll never learn no younger. But all this time you've—give me the Ritz. I thought maybe you didn't like me."

"You thought wrong," said Gerber charitably.

He missed eleven targets and hit one.

An hour later he met Delova at Pietro's Bar. Taking Gerber aside, Delova spoke hesitantly.

"I was wondering, Gerb. Of course, I suppose you wouldn't be interested. Probably you've other plans, or probably it wouldn't suit you. But I happened to think. Now I'm up for reelection, and I need a man to sort of canvass the district for me. Not very pleasant work, but then not so bad and pays pretty well. I didn't know

but what you might want a little something to keep you occupied."

Gerber declined with appropriate thanks, but with an unconscious something—perhaps an inflection, perhaps a gesture or an expression—that said he would not require such employment because better things were available when he wanted them.

"Of course," Delova apologized, "I didn't figure you needed anything like that; I just thought it might—fill in, so to speak. I could get plenty of men, but I'm particular. There are not many like you floating around. Well, look me up."

Gerber was puzzled. Why did Delova, why did all of them, seem to think he had ability? He had not talked. They knew nothing about him.

#### V

GERBER'S disgust at the quarter was tempered at times by a passive attitude. At other moments old longings took hold of him: youth's moods, half forgotten, rushed back for a breath or two; a faraway loveliness of blossoming trees blew for an instant into long, low rooms stale with odors of cigar smoke and spilt wine. This strange beauty filled him with a fierce resentment. . . . If he could take the wine out under the blossoming trees, and dream forever. . . . But that was absurd.

Once, as he stood in his silent, abstracted way in Emile's bar, some one he knew entered. It was a friend from his home town, and Gerber was eager to shake hands. But Gerber recalled what a bother it would be. He would be called upon to account for the last fifteen years. Explain, explain! One's friends were inquisitorial institutions. And he would be expected to be equally curious about this man's activities. Gerber felt no such curiosity. Why couldn't they meet him as if they had parted yesterday? That was impossible, and so Gerber averted his face and soon left the place.

The next time he stopped at the shooting gallery he hit two clay targets, and

the girl congratulated him and told him her name was Hazel.

"Don't you ever go to the movies nor nothing?" she asked.

"I don't have time," he informed her.

"What do you do?"

"I don't know," he laughed.

"Some time," she ventured, "if—if you'd like to go to the movies, or to the Puccini Cabaret or—something. . ."

"That would be fine," he assured her, without enthusiasm.

Wouldn't it be! He hated that type. Yet she was pretty—in a coarse way. Her smile he rather liked, perfunctory though it was. When she smiled at him it wasn't so perfunctory. After all, were there such things as types?

## VI

DELOVA was an oily politician, reflected Gerber, who was punctilious but none too cordial when they met. Delova was a professional good fellow, a sort more despicable than the candid boor. Gerber, however, wondered sometimes whether Delova was not more sincere than that. Wasn't it as possible for a man to be a politician because he was a friend to every one as to be a friend to every one because he was a politician?

Gerber was beginning to see in the quarter things that he had not noticed. The friendship of these men was worth something. There were, for instance, Pietro and Emile. They had assured him, without solicitation on his part, that should he ever need aid of any sort, they would be proud to give it. One didn't often encounter such sympathy in what had been known in his youth as polite society.

He continued to live in the hotel with the frayed red carpets and dim red lights. He supposed that he had become used to its ways. It might have been worse. It was not uncomfortable. His bed contained blankets enough for these winter nights, and the sheets were changed every week. Once a month the proprietor went over the room with a vacuum cleaner. Wasn't all that a

fair return for three and a half a week?

He saved by breakfasting in Margot's Coffee House. One ate there for almost nothing. He recalled how at first the place had turned his stomach. It had been not so much the fringe of dirt on the platters as the presence of the horrible old Frenchman who somehow was there always. The old Frenchman had no socks, but stuffed pieces of newspaper between his shreds of shoes and his unclean feet. Invariably his nose dripped. But Gerber trained himself not to see the old Frenchman. And Gerber was able to ignore the condition of the platters, the state of the waiter's fingernails.

It was all in getting accustomed to things. One needn't be so particular.

He realized now that he commanded a certain respect in the quarter. Queer he had not noticed it before.

If one became lonely, even Delova and Hazel might be worth cultivating. They were the most respectful of all. They fawned. And yet, Delova was droll when drinking; Hazel was not unattractive—in her own vulgar way.

## VII

WHY should he hate the quarter? It was much like the other strata of society. Not as mental, perhaps, not so cleanly, but perplexed by the same problems, cursed with the same ambition to succeed, which meant making money. These people were more primitive, less influenced by sham and pretense. What difference did it make to them what he had been or whether he ever again would be anything? They accepted him as they happened to find him. Whether he had been trained in a brickyard or a university did not remotely concern them.

Therein they differed commendably from those he once had called fondly his own sort. His former associates had no time to consider a man as he appeared every day; they were too absorbed in what he was and what his chances were.

It was comforting to shelter oneself in friendly wine rooms from the chill fogs that drifted out of the bay in the mornings, from the cold forlorn rain that often dripped all evening.

By this time he looked like the less prosperous habitues. His suit was increasingly shabby. His first few weeks in the quarter he had shaved every day, but now he considered twice a week often enough. He no longer changed his collars daily. The others didn't observe these niceties, and he wasn't posing as some one apart.

Gerber had banished to a remote place in his thoughts whatever had driven him from his career. Probably it was no event or series of events. More likely it was the cumulative effect of sapping influences, or some subtle distintegration of purpose, a process too submerged for him to picture clearly. Neither did the career itself bother him. He refrained, too, from moralizing over whether he was better off or worse off.

Flashes of the old sense of loveliness, fragile moods, still maddened him at moments. But he no longer was urged to follow their whims, to wander away somewhere seeking from vague questions vaguer answers. He was content to dream passively, whether he was resting his elbow on a bar or lying on the bed in his bare room staring at the cracked ceiling. If this odd tangent with beauty lasted until it hurt, he cured the pain with drink, dulled himself into a state of languid indifference.

Thus Gerber came to accept the quarter.

### VIII

In the early spring Gerber, grown careless to the point of inertia, stayed soggy with drink for days. He always was able to walk purposely, and he remained enveloped in his obscurity of silence. You would not have suspected that he was in such a condition. A certain refinement clung to him; he remained quiet, conventional, polite.

Otherwise he was indistinguishable from the most shiftless loafer in any

of the bars. He wore one shirt for weeks, changed his collars only when the whim seized him. Dirt darkened his growth of beard, and his face was gaunt, expressionless. His eyes seemed fixed on something a vast distance away, and they alone looked clean, as if they mirrored a clear current of the mind that was hidden in a wilderness but coursed somewhere with the snow-cold detachment of a mountain stream.

One evening he found himself on his bed fighting off an overpowering drowsiness that he feared inexplicably, that felt like death itself. He conquered, after a hard battle, and sat up. He was fully dressed. He could not remember what day of the month or the week it was, how long he had slept, where he had been or when he had eaten. Lack of these details bothered him. He got so angry that the veins in his forehead stood out sharply.

Suddenly his agitation vanished. He gazed calmly at the ceiling. He closed his eyes, and immediately began its grapple with some problem of curves and angles. He saw a formless mass of steel and concrete. It began to take shape grotesquely. Was it a bridge or a building? He didn't know. Jumping up, he rummaged in a bureau drawer until he found a stub of a pencil and a bit of paper. But it was no use. As soon as he tried to sketch all ideas left him, and after he had scribbled a little he threw down pencil and paper in disgust.

Then a swooning weakness crept over him, and in terror he rushed from the room, downstairs and into Pietro's bar next door.

He had two drinks of raw brandy, felt better, and walked slowly down the street, where the lights were coming on and a chill wind blew. A few couples were going into the Puccini Cabaret to dine. Mothers with ample figures were out rounding up their children for the evening meal. Men without overcoats hurried along, their coat collars turned up futilely. Gerber snuggled into his heavy overcoat.

A sentimental mood touched him. He was utterly lonely—he never remembered such loneliness. His head drooped. He looked strangely humble. His superior air was gone.

He recalled Hazel of the shooting gallery. She, after all, was a woman, young, not without charms. Such women were comforting at times like this.

What of the economic question? A search of his pockets revealed fifty cents. It was all he had. He would not stop to consider why he had so little, but would concern himself with remedial measures. He could sell his overcoat; the weather would be warmer soon. There was Delova, with his offer of a job. If Delova had nothing, there were Pietro, Emile, Jim and the rest—all his friends. They would look after him. He was lucky; he need not worry a moment. Everybody in the quarter was his friend. He was aglow with a sudden affection for people in general.

### IX

HE approached the shooting gallery with an enthusiasm that seemed to disconcert Hazel. He didn't tell her he was in difficulty. As he held her hand, chatted smilingly and leaned over the counter with assurance, she studied him covertly.

"And so," he wound up, "any time you say, any evening, this very one if you like. . . ."

"Sorry," she said, in a hardened tone he had not heard before, and with the decisiveness common to women, "I'm all dated up—every night this week.

P'raps next week—but I can't say just when."

He left shrugging his shoulders, and hunted up Delova. He greeted Delova with a little laugh of cordiality and an outstretched hand. Delova's eyes narrowed, and he rubbed his cheek as he did when a problem confronted him.

"The job's not open now," he finally told Gerber. "You should 've grabbed it while the grabbing was good. I don't know of anything, but you'll have no trouble getting—something. There's not much unemployment."

He turned away, failing, for the first time since their acquaintance, to say, "Look me up."

When Gerber told Pietro and Emile, they gave him drinks and said, "Sure—fix you up," but beyond that were vague.

Two days later Pietro didn't offer a drink. Gerber had to pay for everything he ordered. It was the same way in the resorts conducted by Emile and Jim.

The next day Pietro would not place the brandy on the bar until Gerber had thrown down the money, which was the last dollar remaining from the sale of the overcoat. And Gerber heard Pietro remark in a low tone to some one: "Only a drunken bum, after all. It disappoint me. I thought. . . ."

Gerber asked himself what could be the matter. It could not be his insolvent condition. They had known all along that he was on the edge of this. What had he done? Why had their attitude changed? He went away wondering.



# A Russian

By Cuthbert Wright

**I**N a few moments the clerk came back. "Mr. Nichols will see you," he said.

He held open the door, and I passed into an inner office, long, low and dim. Immediately I experienced the sensation of having been abruptly transported into an atmosphere different from that of the banal business on which I had come, an atmosphere suddenly introduced by something rich, calm and simplified in the room itself. The eyes went first to a smoulder of color made by a piece of Bokhara hanging on the wall; from thence they traveled to a long pulsation of green leaves and sunlight framed by one broad window at the back against which was outlined the head of the man I had come to see. The voices of desk-clerks and the chatter of a typewriter trailed into silence as the door closed. The window opened on a private alley remote from the noises of the street; beyond the casement could be seen an expanse of orange wall drenched with almost Oriental light and trellised by lindens and chestnut trees quivering with sun-rays and birdsong. On the desk bloomed a pot of lilies, their pale spirals mystical like candles and pervading the dimness with a faint aching odor.

"I hope I may offer you something," said the sub-director when the business was transacted. "It is always a pleasure to receive a friend of Baron Golden."

In response I opened a cigarette-case. "Thank you, I don't smoke," said he lightly, and at that moment a servant entered bearing coffee and a decanter. Mr. Nichols served me swiftly, then poured himself out a little coffee, ignoring the alcohol.

"You indulge none of the innocuous vices?" I said.

"Your word is well chosen," replied the sub-director, laughing. "Since man has discovered vices, as you call them, he has forgotten what pleasure is. For my part, I prefer to keep my head clear and senses sharpened for the latter when it comes, rather than indulge the nervous satisfaction of sipping a raw poison or making a furnace of my mouth."

Whatever might have been sententious in these remarks uttered by another was mitigated by his rich voice as well as by something at once ambiguous and very charming in his whole manner. He was a large man who, like many people of his type, had kept down his bulk by hard exercise so that he carried himself with extreme grace. His graying hair he wore close-cut like a German, and from time to time when he spoke an expression of singular animation glowed momentarily in his gray eyes and disappeared like intermittent sunlight.

"Before I lost my fortune it was not so," he went on, speaking of his lost fortune as though it had been a train he had just missed. "Then I amused myself by possessing as much as possible and in as complicated a fashion. I had, to some degree, the vulgar mania of the connoisseur—the collection of experiences. An estate in South Russia, a palace in Rome, an apartment at Paris, stables at Chantilly, a villa at Morocco, a wife, daughters, marvelous friends, all that sort of thing. . . . Now that the Revolution has taken away all that, I do not regret it. Perhaps the disease which has ruined my country has attacked me too under a different form and I have

somehow acquired the detestation of ownership. Curious, is it not?"

"I find your resignation very remarkable," I said, for one hears this sort of thing so often in Central Europe, and I was not unwilling to humor a taste for sumptuous reminiscence which, after all, cost neither of us anything.

"In a world such as you conceive it, do you think I would have been resigned?" retorted the Russian. "Ah, to have had everything (the fashion with which he pronounced the pronoun is indescribable), to have so known how to live, to have had all that embellishes life at hand . . . and then in an instant, in the twinkling of an eye . . . all that swept away! In 1914 I had no wish which could have remained ungratified, and in 1920 my mother, eighty years old, died alone of cold. In the Ukraine I have walked the roads under the stars, all around, the flat sleeping lands that once were mine, all mine, and weeping with rage and pain because . . . I was hungry. No, a thousand times no, were life the thing you believe it to be, this stupid, soulless hodge-podge of melodrama and brutal farce, I would have shot myself long ago. There is another world, and its presence all about us—in those cold, sleeping solitudes of my country, in those trees, those rays of sun, yes, and even in these dull and heartless German streets—has kept me alive."

"You are a spiritualist then?" I asked.

"Why not?" he replied. "I have even reason to think that I am one of the greatest mediums now in the world. Such an endowment renders life supportable, isn't it so? I have seen and talked with ever so many amusing people—much more entertaining, at least, than one ever meets in Germany—Byron, the great Frederic, Turgeney, Antinous, the beautiful barbarian whom Cæsar loved. He confided to me the reason why he drowned himself in the Nile."

"He was . . .?"

"He was bored," concluded Mr. Nichols laughing.

It was simple in that seductive room with its dim perfume and play of sun-

light to yield to the fascination of this singular financier, without being taken in by a word of his conversation. Berlin has at present a population of about 200,000 Russians, and the first thing that anyone of these exiles will tell you is that he has lost an enormous fortune; the second is usually that this world is not what it seems. From a fortune which was never anything but a dream to a world which does not exist is nothing for a people which has, to a rare degree, the turn for colorful autobiography. Everything in the telling which, in another, would be tedious and vulgar—snobbery, ostentation, charlatanism, a cheap religiosity—is purged through the crucible of their acute racial charm.

"Yes," said the sub-director, "I have known how to live. Life has offered me her most subtle fruits and flowers, and I have enjoyed at their richest possibilities all the good things this world has for her children—limitless wealth, the hunting of wild beasts, peril in the company of dear friends, love and danger, danger and love. The last above all. I have been completely, wonderfully happy, and perhaps it is because I have never rushed headlong after happiness in the way so many people do. It has often seemed to me that love, for many here in the West, is like a brutal narcotic taken nervously, half-heartedly, like alcohol or tobacco. Glass after glass, one idiotic cigarette after another, till you are stupefied and led off somewhere, and some fine morning you awake alone in the bed of a prostitute and find you have nothing left, only a headache. How much better to sit back and wait till the divine, the inevitable moment offers itself, instead of panting and sweating, embarrassed and out of breath like a stupid suitor on the heels of his mistress. And people like to call that the dangerous life, the return to romance. The return to the animal, say I.

"In Samarcand where I was once . . . let us say a kind of official, I have watched a symbolic representation of what I mean. Do you know Turkestan? It is a wonderful country, incomparably picturesque. After sundown the streets



are deserted, and if a native is caught outside he is flogged. One would say a city of tombs in the blue moonlight. The Turkish governor rides through those solitudes surrounded by a guard of men in white who brandish long whips at the abandoned streets. There certain aspects of life have remained unchanged since Alexander. The women, for instance, resemble great bundles of white rags with two black holes for eyes; one never hears them speak, and if they did, their speech would have nothing of the human in it. They are mere covies of white fowl for the breeding of young.

"In the evening, the head-men sit out under the stars, dressed in superb tunics glittering with woven coins, lance-heads of pure jade gleaming in the snowy folds of their turbans. Then one by one the very young dancers come out and execute strange steps by the light of the fires. They are quite naked and without adornment save for one red flower above the ear like a jewel of blood, and their hair lies like a blue plumage on the warm bronze of their shoulders. When the dance is ended, each comes and lies down at the feet of him who has been chosen. But why do I speak of loves as though there were several? There is only one love in that sense."

"The first?"

"The first. And the reason is that, mingled with the sensations of that primal experience, ineffable as they are, is that which renders them supreme—the sense of pain, the sense of guilt. What of the facile, harmonious and resplendent which life contains for one later on can compare with that first exquisite moment accomplished between two beating hearts in the insecurity of the dark?"

"You speak of love in the physical sense."

The Russian smiled.

"Physical love, the higher love," he said. "These are phrases to charter imaginary boundaries. Shall I tell you a story, one that will seem to have no relation to what we are saying? After the Revolution, we were locked up—fifty-two of us—in the Fortress of Peter and

Paul. There was with me my best friend; we had been at the front together and later as flyers in the forces of Admiral Kolschak. He was a wonderfully lovable boy, the last of his very old race, whose vitality seemed to have sprung up in him for one supreme effort before expiring. Well, every evening before midnight a flare of lights would appear behind the high raised grille of the prison, and a handsome youth in uniform, a Lett, would descend the steps halfway and read out, always laughing, the names of the condemned. Often, in dreams, I can still see the gleam of his white teeth in the lamplight, and his very full lips, which were scarlet as if someone had painted them. Our doomed comrades would bid us adieu, tranquilly or otherwise, depending on temperament, and follow the Lett up the steps, and a little later there would be the sound of firing.

"At last there were only a dozen of us left. It was extraordinarily unreal; you felt as if you were participating in a historic nightmare, or posing for a canvas of the French romantic school! Last Roll-Call of the Victims of the Terror, what? You will scarcely believe that one could sleep under such circumstances, but sleep we did, and for my part, I have always been able to sleep when I liked and as long as I chose. I believed then that I cared nothing about life, and I knew that my friend would be acquitted, for he had friends in the Tcheka, the little scamp, and was a foreigner besides. To make a long story short, one night I slept straight through that accursed roll-call, and was awakened only by the sound of a reverberation. My neighbor touched my arm; he was weeping.

"It is all over with him," he said.

"With whom?"

"Paul. They have murdered him. The Lett called out your name and he answered for you."

"Not a word, not a note," concluded Mr. Nichols smoothing his gray hair. "No gestures. He was not a Russian, you see."

It was not the moment to inquire how

Mr. Nichols himself had ultimately escaped the fate of the fifty-two, and I perceived with some regret that it was time to go. Privately I believed the Fortress of Peter and Paul to have been as unsubstantial a fact in the sub-director's life as the villa in Morocco, but it was impossible not to admire his racial aptitude for narrative.

"Let me give you my card," he said

in parting. "And I hope very much that we shall meet again."

When I was outside in the sunlight, among the moving trees which he had said were instinct with realities unknown to us, I glanced at the card on which was written:

*Prince Yupinoff.*

*Chamberlain to H.M. the Emperor  
Nicholas II.*



## The End

*By Abigail Cresson*

I TWISTED a ribbon  
In my hair—  
You looked but did not know  
It was there.

I baked you a loaf that was  
Brown and sweet—  
You never praised what  
You had to eat.

I scrubbed all your floors  
As white as snow—  
You walked upon them  
And did not know.

And now I am through—  
You're a good man, yes,  
But my heart is a thing  
You cannot guess.

You praise me now when  
It is too late—  
Why did you think you could  
Make me wait?

The words that I longed for,  
Now I am free,  
Seem foolish and empty  
And sad to me.



# Harold C. Mills

By Byron Darnton

## I

**H**AROLD C. MILLS was exuberant that morning. It was evident from the moment he stepped in the door of the National Commercial Bank. Even James, the new messenger, noticed that the assistant cashier was in especially good humor. And James was glad; it looked like an easy day.

The days were always easy for James when Harold C. Mills hummed his crazy little tune half under his breath. Easy and interesting. The assistant cashier would talk to him, would tell him about the strange things that had happened to the cheques he spent so much time stamping "Paid—National Commercial Bank, Harmon, Mich."

Those cheques were a great mystery to James. In they came every day, bearing on their backs stamped endorsements from faraway places—Chicago, and St. Louis, and New York. He even remembered one that had carried a San Francisco endorsement. It was made out by George Harrington, the president of the bank, when he was taking his five weeks' vacation. James remembered looking at that endorsement and resolving that he, too, would be a bank president and spend vacations in California.

Perhaps it was because Harold C. Mills had seen that look on James' face that he occasionally took time to do what he could to help the new messenger. For the assistant cashier remembered how he had come to the

bank twenty years before and had dreamed the same dreams. Now here was James, starting out on his battle to achieve his ambitions. A good boy, James, Mills had decided. He would help him learn the business of banking. And he had—that is, whenever he was in good humor.

But he was seldom in good humor—that was the trouble. The gossip in the bank had it that the assistant cashier's home life was none too pleasant. Occasionally his wife would come to the bank when she was "down to the city," as inhabitants of Harmon called being in the two block section where the stores and offices were. It may have been these visits that caused the gossip. For no matter how cheerful Harold C. Mills had been, the appearance of his wife always left him dour.

James hoped Mrs. Mills would not stop in that morning. While he was changing the pens on the cheque stand in the tiny lobby, the assistant cashier greeted him with a "Good morning" that was positively cheery. It augured well.

James watched Mr. Mills go about his duties. Sort of seedy-looking for a bank cashier, he thought. When he got to that exalted position he would never appear at the bank in trousers that needed pressing as badly as Mr. Mills'. And he would be more careful to have his hair clipped frequently down around the neck and up by the ears. James was careful about that already. He had been told it gave him a "clean-cut" appearance.

Meantime Mr. Mills was getting

ready for the day's routine. But he did not go about his tasks with his usual frown. He hummed the crazy little tune merrily. The Detroit letter totaled \$6,000 that morning. Quite a bit; he must send the majority of the cheques to Detroit when the afternoon deposits were mailed to the city banks. Have to keep the balance above \$25,000—there was the interest to watch.

And so on until the green curtains were raised just as the clock pointed to nine.

A few customers straggled in about nine-thirty. One of them, Nathaniel Bigsby, came to the desk of the assistant cashier.

"Want a New York draft, Hal," he said. "Darn these Eastern fellers that won't take an honest man's cheque."

The assistant cashier reached for his blank drafts.

"Who's it to this time, Nat?" he asked.

"Spence and Spence, same's last time. Forty-two ninety-eight."

Mills filled out the draft in the flowing hand he had learned years before in the business college. The "college" was by courtesy—it filled the place of high school for boys who couldn't waste their time with Latin and history.

"Harold C. Mills," he wrote at the bottom. The exuberance died as he flourished the same old signature. It seemed as if that signature, that "Harold C. Mills," stood for everything that had gone wrong between him and his wife. Years before, shortly after they were married, Myrtle had insisted on the "Harold C." He had always preferred plain "H. C.," but he finally compromised after her original demand that he become officially "H. Carson Mills."

He hadn't known Myrtle was that way when he married her. Highfalutin, he called it in their frequent arguments. And that was the way with everything.

To the neighbors she had always spoken of "the bank." She often told Harold of the position they must uphold. She never would go with him to the little parties given by the graduates of the business college. The people weren't the right sort. And she made him cut out the bowling league he had liked so much in those days almost twenty years before, just because the only alleys in town were in the Oriental Pool and Billiard Parlors where the gay young blades who clerked in the stores and labored in the factories spent their evenings.

"You don't meet the men you should meet there," she had told him. "Wait a few years until you can join the City Club."

Somehow or other he hadn't cared to join the City Club when he could afford it. Of course he was never asked very enthusiastically; once or twice Mr. Harrington mentioned it to him as an advisable thing to do some time, but that was all. And he wouldn't have joined anyway, he thought, unless, of course, Myrtle absolutely insisted upon it. She had spoken of it often and each time he begged off, saying that he hadn't been invited and didn't want to push. Myrtle criticized him for it, but secretly she admitted that perhaps the reason was sufficient. Her own fruitless efforts to get in the Thursday Bridge Club had taught her some of the difficulties in upholding their position.

All these things came back to him as he thought of the name he had signed to Nat's draft. Nat had gone now and the assistant cashier sat chewing the end of his fountain pen.

Years of nagging, that's all they had been. Even Evelyn had made no difference. In fact, she made it worse—now Myrtle would say to him, "We must give our daughter the right advantages," and he always felt as if she suspected him of not wanting to. "I'll look after my

daughter and protect her from her father," she implied.

The daughter was getting old enough to join the game herself now. She wondered why daddy didn't do this, like Ernestine's father did; why he insisted on wearing that old hat; why he stayed in the living room when any of the boys came to call on her. Evelyn didn't think her father improved her social chances a bit, and she wasn't backward about letting him know it.

Oh, the years had not been pleasant, Mills thought. Now he didn't enjoy being with either Evelyn or Myrtle, not even when they weren't nagging him. Their little holiday trips were always sorry affairs for him. During the Christmas visits to Myrtle's mother in the country his wife usually was in excellent humor, but there was no joy for Mills. Long sieges of impressing the neighbors, that's what they were. They must realize that Myrtle had married an important man.

From the start Mills had understood his part in the game. He had fallen into a resigned submission. And Myrtle would show her pleasure as they called on the Smiths and the Bakers. Mills would discuss farm financing, or politics, or something equally impressive, while she sat in the Baker parlor, well back from the huge coal stove with the red and cracking isinglass. She must not allow her face to get moist and overheated. An old pouter-pigeon, Mills thought. Erect in the uncomfortable red plush chair, Myrtle would smooth the wrinkles over her broad hips. It was her gesture of satisfaction. To Mills it was the visible sign of his bondage.

## II

THE two wrinkles running up from the top of his nose grew deeper and deeper as Mills thought. And then he remembered. Again he hummed the crazy little tune.

He and Myrtle and Evelyn were going to the Harringtons' that night for dinner. It was an event. To his wife it meant the beginning of the realization of social hopes of a lifetime. To Evelyn it meant more. Bobby Harrington had just returned from Cornell. Only a few hours after his return Mrs. Harrington 'phoned—"Just an informal little evening," she had said.

All day long the thought of the evening kept running through Mills' head. And he hummed his little tune.

At home after work he found a great state of excitement. His wife was already dressed, though they would not start for two hours. Evelyn had just come from Mlle. de Courcy's Beauty Parlor and her hair was a marvel of marcel. Admonitions began as soon as he opened the door. He must do this; he must not do that; he must hurry and dress.

Finally the two hours was over. In his spotless stiff collar Mills was uncomfortable, but he still hummed his little tune. The collar was higher than those he usually wore; Myrtle thought it looked "dressier," so he had put it on. Myrtle appeared a bit old and careworn to be making her *début* in Harmon society, Mills thought. But her eyes were bright. And Evelyn was beautiful; there was no doubt of that. For a moment he lost his resolution as he looked at Evelyn. Then he thought of the years . . .

Mills went back to the garage, got the two-year-old Dodge, and drove up in front of the house. The car had just been washed on Myrtle's orders, and it did look different.

"The old hack looks like new, don't she?" he said as his wife and daughter got into the rear seat.

They were not much too early in arriving at the Harringtons'. Bobby received them and in a moment he was joined by his mother and father. There was a little aimless talk, the two men discussing the advisability

of allowing Will Jones to borrow another \$500 on his 300 acre farm in Woodstead township, while the women went over the details of the coming church supper. Evelyn and Bobby seemed to be getting along well—he was telling her how beautiful the alumni song was, singing snatches of it in a low voice that was not at all unpleasant.

When they rose to go in, Mrs. Mills darted a look at her husband as if to remind him of something. But it was unnecessary—Mr. Harrington didn't offer her his arm and Mrs. Harrington did not appear to expect her husband's in the least.

Things went rather well at the table. The meal was simple—in fact Mrs. Mills was surprised.

"Wait till I pay them back," she thought. "I'll show them something."

Bobby seemed to be impressed with healthy young Evelyn, and Mrs. Mills permitted herself to dream a very pleasant dream for just a second as she listened to Mrs. Harrington describe the Golden Gate.

Her husband was handling his knives and forks perfectly. She had cautioned him to watch Mrs. Harrington, and he was doing it faithfully. Here was the meat course already, and everything going off well.

"We're taking a few new members in the City Club," Mr. Harrington interrupted her reverie, "and I've suggested you, Harold. You're in a position to join now, and I may say that the bank would like very much to see you do it. I hope I may tell the

committee that you will accept the invitation."

Mrs. Mills smoothed the wrinkles over her broad hips and straightened herself in her chair. Perhaps if she had not done that her husband would have lost his courage. But it reminded him of too much—it was the old signal of his bondage. Years of bondage, of listening to "Harold, why do you persist in being so common?" Years of remembering his position, and impressing the neighbors, and keeping on his collar in the house during the warm summer evenings. It reminded him of giving up bowling, and not joining the Elks like Jim Miller and Eddie Kennedy.

Mills did not answer right away. He waited until five pairs of eyes were looking at him. His wife was growing impatient, he could see; she was almost on the point of answering herself.

Nonchalantly, for all the world as if he were as accustomed to it as he was to signing "Harold C. Mills" at the bottom of drafts, he balanced a huge splotch of mashed potato on the blade of his knife, leaned far over the table, and thrust the food into his gaping mouth.

"Thanks, Mr. Harrington," he said calmly while his wife turned a violent red, "I'll consider it."

\* \* \*

Humming his crazy little tune half under his breath, Harold C. Mills listened to tearful upbraidings while he drove the shining Dodge back to his home.



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# The Higher Learning in America

X

## The University of California

*By Stephen Fitzroy*

### I

CALIFORNIA is the land of the Californiac. In California, local pride soars to psychopathological heights. California has the best climate, the smoothest highways, the greatest harbors, the greenest grass, the reddest apples, the biggest trees, the sweetest oranges, the handsomest girls, the most sinewy athletes, the acutest statesmen, the gaudiest scenery, and the largest, most intellectual university in the universe.

In the center of all this hurrah lies Berkeley, the site of that university, and squatting against the side of a hill of goodly size, which in the East would be called a mountain, are the shiny new white buildings, the enormous Greek theater and the imposing granite Campanile with the hideous chimes.

### II

THE Californiac, taking a deep breath, and placing his thumbs in the armholes of his waistcoat, periodically gives three rousing cheers for the Student Self-Government there on tap—an institution which gives valuable training to future county coroners, Rotary Club orators, and members of the House of Representatives. California campus politics, in fact, are identical with city politics or county politics or State politics or national politics or any other kind of politics that exist among a peo-

ple who steadfastly believe that one thousand or one million or one hundred million casually interested idiots can govern themselves. Student government at the University of California is controlled by a handful of campus pushers. The great majority care no more about it than they do about the government of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha. Few students vote at the elections, because few of them care a cuss which of a half-dozen candidates gets the job. The remedy is of course obvious. The students should take more interest in their own affairs and see to it that the best men are elected. But the students don't—and neither do their fathers or their mothers or their sisters or their brothers or they themselves take any active interest in their local government or their State government or their national government. Besides, the best men don't want to be elected anyhow. What's the real remedy? I give it up.

### III

ANOTHER cherished California institution, one that ranks side by side with Student Self-Government and is even more ridiculous, is the Honor System, surely a droll appellation for the elaborate scheme of spying and tattling which has as its high aim the prevention of cheating at examinations. The student is most emphatically not put upon his honor; he is simply threatened with dire punishment if he is caught and given away by one of his fellow students.

Sentimental seniors, who, having repented of their earlier sins, are appointed to the Student Affairs Committee, make extremely long and dull harangues, filled with hoary and oft-enunciated platitudes by Dr. Frank Crane, informing the new student that he is "on his honor" and then adding that it is his duty to make sure that his neighbor is as honest as himself, and threatening him with loss of credit, disgrace or expulsion, not only if he is caught cheating himself but also if he sees cheating going on and does not gallantly report it. Thus, if I observe the enchanting co-ed on my left surreptitiously acquiring data on proportional representation in Switzerland from the broad-jumper in front of her, and do not deliver her over to the campus catch-polls instanter, I am liable to be cashiered. Personally, I have little desire to cheat in examinations, perchance for the reason that I care very little whether I pass or not, but I do strenuously object to being forced to play the policeman, the secret service man, the prohibition agent to my fellow sufferers. And yet, even the campus comic paper, *The Pelican*, hotly defends this imbecility.

#### IV

CALIFORNIA has two monthly publications, the aforementioned *Pelican* and *The Occident*. They are published by an organization called the English Club, which, in addition to publishing them, produces a bad play every year in the Greek theater. This club includes most of the actors, soft-shoe dancers, saxophone players, cartoonists, sceneshifters and writers on the campus.

*The Pelican* is purchased widely and specimens of its drolleries are occasionally reprinted in *Judge* and the *Literary Digest*. It essays a certain innocuous daring and specializes in razzing the co-ed. It is properly scornful of "slickers" and "snakes" and "collar ads," though some of its present editors would be judged guilty on all counts by any impartial jury. Its strongest point is

its cartoons; its weakest its so-called humorous editorials.

*The Occident*, contemptuously labeled the *Accident* by the common herd, is a literary magazine that is purchased by contributors and their families and friends, and by the intelligentsia of the campus, who also read *Shadowland* and the *Bookman*. It is not so bad as it might be, even though a recent number featured a short story by Elinor Glyn as a model for campus writers (and incidentally as publicity for the Paramount movie company), and an article on the great field for college men in the moving pictures by an ex-assistant director who is taking a course in "The Art of the Theater." There is, of course, always erudite critical comment on the new books and plays and movies by undergraduate critics who announce at the top of their reviews that "this book may be purchased at the Sather Gate Bookshop." There are also some very bad short stories, and some lyrical gems about lolling in the daffodils, the call of the open road, and my mute imprisoned soul. But then again there is occasionally some readable verse by Paul Tanaquil or Stephen Pepper and sometimes a very fair essay by one of the learned doctors.

The *Daily Californian*, besides giving to an eagerly waiting world its inspiring editorials on "Student Self-Government," "The Honor System," "The Morals of the Students" and "The Necessity for College Spirit," prints intriguing articles on the work of the Student Affairs Committee, letters to the editor by disgruntled fellows who will subsequently write similar tosh to the editor of the San Francisco *Chronicle*, and a column of jokes by Marcus Loew out of B. F. Keith.

The *Razzberry Press* is a scarlet sheet published at irregular intervals by the members of the Press Club, in which, under cover of their anonymity, they hurl ribald jests at (1) co-eds and sorority teas, (2) prominent athletes, (3) queeners, fur-footers, snakes and frequenters of hotel lobbies, and (4) the



personal enemies of the members. It is nearly always amusing, but sometimes a little bawdy and overdone.

The *Dill Pickle* is a green paper which generally makes its appearance just after the *Razzberry*. It is published by co-eds who aspire to jobs as society reporters or sob-sisters on the *New York Times*. It is ordinarily a very feeble imitation of the *Razzberry*, but lacks the vulgarity which makes the scarlet sheet as good as it is.

*Brass Tacks* is a new publication which will probably be suppressed ere this monograph sees the light of day. It is written by the same pessimists who write letters to the editor. Its only merit is that they commonly write destructive instead of constructive criticism. It is, however, generally exceedingly banal.

I hear refreshing rumors on the campus of a new magazine, which, I am informed, is to be called the *Laughing Horse*, and is to thoroughly lampoon every sacred campus tradition. If its editors are not set upon by the American Legion and the local Ku Klux Klan I have hopes for it.

## V

THERE is considerable interest in things literary and cultural on the campus, whether real or bogus I am not yet quite sure. So-called "culture courses" are always heavily attended, especially by the women. The men still cling to the good American superstition that only women and sissies go in for that sort of thing. Lectures on modern Russian literature, American literature, the drama, ancient, Elizabethan, Restoration and modern, and all kinds of poetry are invariably crowded to the doors. Whether this is a sign of intelligent interest or simply a proof that these courses are easy it is difficult to tell. The written critiques which grow out of them are mostly masterpieces of banality. I recently heard an apparently intelligent and well-read young woman read a treatise on Hutchinson's "If

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Winter Comes" in a tone of ecstatic awe. In the same breath she spoke of Byron, Hamlet, Flaubert and Turgenev. She is typical of a great many of the literary undergraduates. They apparently read everything, from Baudelaire to Guest, from Artzibashev to Gene Stratton-Porter, and they speak of them all in the same terms. I should like to hear this young lady review "The Sheik" and "Madame Bovary."

One of the most encouraging signs of intellectual activity on the campus is the success of the Wheeler Hall Plays, a cumulative series of first-rate dramas, which are presented on the platform stage in the Benjamin Ide Wheeler lecture hall. Sam Hume and Irving Pichel, the directors, starting from nothing, have built up this enterprise until it now offers the best series of plays being produced in any American university. A new play is presented every two weeks, each production being repeated three times. Schnitzler's "The Lonely Way" was recently played for the first time in America.

## VI

ALTHOUGH California is not particularly rich in campus customs and traditions, she has a few which are both unique and picturesque. The bonfire rallies in the Greek theatre are the most impressive of the regular shows. In spite of the horrible speeches which the old grads trot out and the ancient jokes which are retailed, these rallies manage to achieve a certain barbaric splendor which is worth all the torture of sitting on concrete steps and alternately roasting and freezing. The great bonfire in the center, where in old Athens stood the altar to Dionysus; the thousands of howling demons packed so close around it that their eyebrows are singed; the riot of colors on the co-eds, weirdly illuminated by the roaring flames; the delirious strains of syncopation; the mad whirl of the serpentine, the yells which cause the old hills to tremble—all these things make incomparable spec-

tacles. There is something about them that you will see nowhere else, something that belongs alone to California, something that makes the blood race in the veins of the most unemotional.

It is a long drop from such glorious and distinctive shows to the Smoker Rally which is held before the big game, but it too has something in it. Freed from the everlasting censorious eyes of the co-eds, the men become naturally and happily vulgar. Sulphurous stories are told by respectable old Masters of Arts and blood-curdling curses are hurled against the Red-Shirts of Stanford University. This freedom was once achieved in two other unique functions of the campus. Now one of these has joined the shades of steam beer and pretzels, and the other is but a hollow mockery of what it once was. I refer, in the first instance, to the late lamented Skull and Keys initiation, or "running," as it was called. This "running" used to furnish one of the highlights of the college year. It was vulgar, yes, but the whole thing was done in such a spirit of fun that it could have offended nobody but one who deliberately looked for nastiness. But the campus vestals deemed this custom too obscene for the eyes of the W.C.T.U., some of the members were expelled and the whole society placed on probation. So passed one of California's most entertaining shows.

The other custom which has fallen upon evil ways is the guarding of the "C." The "Big C" is a large gold letter, studded with electric lights, which is jammed into the hill, high above the Greek theatre. It is the duty of the Sophomore class to guard this letter from the unholy hands of marauding Red-Shirts, who daub the sacred symbol with red paint if they get a chance. When I was a Soph there were barrels of beer and sandwiches and coffee and other engaging entertainment. They still have the sandwiches and coffee, I believe.

Unlike those of most Eastern universities, the California campus is deserted

after class hours. At five o'clock, when Eastern men are just beginning to come out, the Californians disappear. There are no little groups sitting on the fences or perched on the steps to the library. There are no crowds playing catch or galloping around. The place is utterly deserted, coldly silent, except when the Campanile chimes jar the air with their clamor. The students have gone to their homes in San Francisco or Oakland, or down into the town of Berkeley, or to their frat houses, which are all off the campus.

## VII

COLLEGE spirit, while it is present at California, does not assume the virulent aspect that it has in universities where the students live in closer contact with one another. There are, of course, the usual bores who make long speeches on the subject and affirm that the football team will surely lose every game unless the student body stands behind it "like one man." The crowds do turn out for the football game, but not because they think that it is their duty to do so. They like football and they have a very human eagerness to be with the winner. California has not lost a game for two years and the crowds are enormous. If she had not won a game for two years the team would play to empty bleachers. Nothing could tempt such a crowd to a chess game or a debate or a soccer game except free hot-dogs and beer or a concert by one of the campus jazz bands. The general custom seems to be to go to what you like and let the other fellow do the same. Of course a man who stays away from a big game to attend a performance of "Hedda Gabler" would be looked upon as an idiot by his fellows, but such a thing never really happens.

There is nothing particularly distinctive about the annual big game between Stanford and California. It is very much like the big game between any other rival universities. It is usually a very bad exhibition of football.

## VIII

THE faculty at California is, I suppose, one of average sagacity. There are several able men on it, and the usual old chromos. The passing of Henry Morse Stephens cost the university its one really great teacher. There are, however, a number of learned and surprisingly liberal pedagogues, who strike me as being not only mellow, but good scouts as well.

In the courses of study, I can pick out no great and distinctive one. Perhaps the most distinctive is Great Books, a series of lectures by the venerable and universally respected Dean Gailley. Again, there is General Literature, a lecture and reading course in comparative literature given by members of all the different language departments. Outside of these two and Sam Hume's Playwriting and Harold Bruce's Critical Writing, I know of no course that may not be duplicated anywhere.

California has produced four world-famous athletes—Ralph Rose, Doc Beeson, the giant Liversedge and Brick Muller, but only one literary artist. I refer to Frank Norris—and he never took a degree, but quit in disgust after nearly four years. We can claim a few modern young writers—Genevieve Taggard, Hildegard Flanner, Paul Tanaquil, Mary Caroline Davies and the bulge-browed Sidney Howard—but what a pitiful list it is compared to the one that any good Eastern university can offer! Of course there are Jack London, Richard Walton Tully, Max Brand and Jackson Gregory, all of whom we might claim if we wished. Tenth-raters all, save perhaps London, and he quit us after one semester. But the woods are full of California graduates who have become eminent merchants, Rotarians, bond salesmen, politicians, motion picture directors, actors, newspaper editors, criminal lawyers, judges, prohibition enforcement officers, bootleggers, and State senators.

## IX

I AM informed by old-timers that California men are not what they used to be. I suspect that this is only partly true. There is, to be sure, less seen than once upon a time of the college man who chewed tobacco and smoked a filthy pipe, wore decrepit and dirty cords and a blue flannel shirt, and sat on Senior bench by the hour and "piped the flight." Most of the lads now wear belled trousers and silk shirts, purple cravats and beaver hats. They chew Spearmint and smoke Turkish cigarettes. There is less obvious drinking and gambling, and less open sewing of wild oats, but these great sports still go on, though more circumspectly. I am rather widely acquainted among the campus bootleggers, and every one that I know is heavily patronized. Take, for instance, that little oasis down by the bay, a five-minute ride by machine. This little village is affectionately known as the Land of the Free. It boasts, to my certain knowledge, of nine bootleggers, and two open crap games.

But this last frontier is largely the rendezvous of stags. Co-eds are almost never seen there, save a few bold spirits who occasionally visit one of the cafés on casual slumming tours. The fair damsels do, however, sometimes drop into the roadhouses east of Oakland, the better known and comparatively innocuous places on what used to be the old San Francisco Barbary Coast, and the resorts along the Frisco Beach, south of the Cliff House. All things considered, though, these co-eds are not such speedy sprites as they are alleged to be. They like their fun, their jazz, their joy-rides, and perhaps a little of the spirits that inebriate as well as cheer. Some there are who can drink as much synthetic gin as any man on the campus perhaps, but they strike me in the main as being a remarkably circumspect bunch—gay, sophisticated, a little too wise, perhaps, but considerably superior in intellect and horse-sense, not only to the girls of day-before-yesterday, but to their male detractors of today.

## X

WITH fraternities I have no quarrel. I myself belong to no organization whatever and I have no more desire to join a college frat than I have to join the Masons, the Knights of Columbus or the Ku Klux Klan. Yet I have nothing to say against those who do belong to them, or those who aspire to membership. Fraternities are an excellent institution for men from the hinterland. Raw youths from the deserts of Nevada and Arizona and the backwoods of Los Angeles and Powell and Market are restrained from running hog-wild. They are made to keep decent hours on week nights, to devote a reasonable amount of time to study, to go in for athletics or some other campus activity. A worthy mission. Personally, though, I am afraid that I would not relish being told when to retire and when to study, what activity to go out for and what marks I am expected to get. Neither do I look with favor on the prospect of washing dishes, sweeping sidewalks and running errands under the supervision of natty lads in tweed suits whose favorite author is James Oliver Curwood.

## XI

IT'S a great old show, this educational circus. Pink-faced and wasp-waisted student editors flaying "slickers" and "parlor snakes"; future salesmen for "La Magnifico" eight-cent cigars writing poetry for the campus literary magazine; round-shouldered and near-consumptive Doctors of Philosophy sweating over essays for the *Yale Review*; baby-vamps with bobbed hair luring credulous youths from Long Beach, Cal., into smoking Bull Durham and eating in Bohemian waffle kitchens; aspiring candidates for the doctorate eagerly seizing on Keith Preston's scheme of writing a thesis on the pornographies of unexpurgated classics; little groups of serious thinkers, meeting twice weekly to discuss the tendencies in Georgian poetry; butchers' sons from

Red Bluff posturing as campus Don Juans; earnest young men aspiring to lectureships in the English department at six hundred a year; literary co-eds affecting horn-rimmed spectacles, a copy of "Droll Stories," and long black rubber cigarette holders; whimsical essayists, signing themselves "Gentle Reader," taking sly digs at modern literature through the columns of *Student Opinion*; prospective criminal lawyers playing the traps in campus jazz bands; the editor of the comic monthly breaking into the public gazettes in the rôle of profound thinker by hazarding the opinion that co-eds like to be kissed; committees composed of candidates for the teacher's recommendation passing resolutions closing the campus dances one hour earlier; the president of the university taking the popular side in a public debate on Bolshevism with a mountebank; a million dollars being expended in building the largest athletic stadium in the world. Yes, it's a great old show and well worth the price of admission. If California were Oxford it couldn't very well be in California.

## XII

IN summing up, I believe it is the customary thing to exhume all of the platitudes that the lachrymose old grads who ruin the rallies expect. One should relent a little, toss a few bunches of sweet lilacs as a sop and terminate with some obvious hokum about the best days of one's life, the place where one finally found one's self, the beautiful and lasting friendships that one formed, the broadening contacts with superior intellects, and so on down the line. Partly true, unquestionably, but nothing but a mouthing of the obvious. It seems to me that the best thing that I got out of my four college years was the realization that I had no education at all. I have caught just a faint glimpse of far-away vistas, a brief, furtive sight of beautiful and delightful things. Four years of college have shown me the first elusive beginnings of a path.

# The Spiritual Adviser

By Dorothy Hamilton

MR. GANTZ, the minister, had likened middle-age to a fullblown rose. But Mr. Gantz was only thirty, and therefore Mrs. Tossie could not find comfort in his analogy. She felt, too, that Mr. Gantz was fond of saying what would please. He had said that Mrs. Tossie's husband, dead for twenty years, was even now "glorious in his robes of white." She had loved and respected Peter, but she could not think of him in white without thinking of his starched, decent night-shirts, and of how at the very last, these had had to be taken in around the neck to accommodate a shrunken, wrinkled throat. How could Peter be glorious?

It was such as Mr. Gantz who made Mrs. Tossie fearful in her middle-age. He made a specialty of her kind, adapting his sermons to their understanding, praying with them on pastoral calls, helping them over dangerous paths of piety. He wore always an anxious face and seemed to carry his hands and arms with him only for the purpose of crutching the fullblown. He was the steady young son. In him was God foreshadowed.

But to Mrs. Tossie, quite definitely grown afraid both of living and of death, Mr. Gantz represented both. He was flesh—weak, soft, mistaken in his claim of power; and he was eternity—solemn, tedious.

Sitting reading, of an afternoon, spectacles on nose, rocking, Mrs. Tossie would feel her comfortable, slow body fill with fear; there came Mr. Gantz up the walk! She would have to become a little child at his feet. Her head must hide its side-thoughts, especially its poor attempts at subtlety. She would have

to be weak. Her hands would, of themselves, lie limp against the arms of her chair.

"Now, looky here, Mrs. Tossie, we can't have you disgracing us with *this* kind of reading! *You*, who ought to be setting yourself up as an example to the young!" The book was a copy of *Daily Help for Daily Needs*. His clear, boyish laugh rang out. He had created an atmosphere of humor.

He took a chair buoyantly. "And the rheumatism?"

"Some better, I think, Mr. Gantz—only these nights—" She really had not thought of her rheumatism since his last visit, but his expectant tone brought twinges to the calves of her legs.

"My mother used to suffer abominably. Poor dear. Let's see, she had some sort of herb remedy. Yes—ground corn cobs! Do you ever eat corn on the cob, Mrs. Tossie?"

"I used to. But now my teeth—"

"Tut, tut! Your teeth! Why, they're as good as anyone's! They're as good as mine, I'm sure of that. Only last week I had to pay a little pastoral call at the dentist's. Don't think we, any of us, get off scot free!"

"Just look, Mr. Gantz, how nice my poppies are blooming!"

He looked, indulgently.

"Yes, indeed. You are quite a gardener, Mrs. Tossie."

What a silly game! She must show off; he wanted to applaud. He wanted to pick her up by the shell, as if she were a tortoise, and prod what of her extended beyond the shell.

"I'm going to bring you one of my home-made cookies!" she pursued, ris-

ing and disappearing behind the screen door with childish flutter.

But, alone in the kitchen, while she prepared the tray, she let her resentment of Mr. Gantz's presence on her porch take the form of angry jabs, impatient slammings of inanimate things. She let herself picture him as a demon, sitting out there, awaiting her home-made cookies. Why should she please a demon? Why should she pose for him? Was it for him that she took such care to wash down the porch every hot morning, and to make sofa cushions for the wicker chairs?

If not for him, for whom, then? Why did she do anything? What would be the difference—in the end? The end was a neat, green grave, with a slab already there, waiting.

She passed out to the porch again, carrying the tray carefully. When she caught sight of Mr. Gantz's rounded, earnest cheek, she pressed back her resentment, under the sudden influence of a sense of propriety. "God forgive my wicked thoughts," she prayed. And she tried to concentrate on God, little half-second glimpses of Him occurring to her brain: a bewhiskered, white face, eyes the like of which no mortal had ever beheld, scarcely any body at all, but a kind of tunic, many-colored like the coat of Joseph's, covering everything below the head and trailing off for miles.

This brought her to Mr. Gantz's side in a humble mood. She sat down again in her chair like an obedient, unassuming child.

"And what do you hear from the son and daughter?" asked Mr. Gantz by way of earning his cookies and lemonade. "Both families well, I hope?"

"Well? Yes, middling. I wish I could see that little grandson of mine. He'll be a big boy before I ever lay eyes on him."

"Ah! Your daughter's boy, I believe. Well, well, his mother will be bringing him, one of these fine days, to surprise you. Never fear!" He sent her a radiant, sure smile over the glass in his hand.

"I'm not so sure," said Mrs. Tossie. "It's somewhat of a trip and my daughter isn't in any too good health to travel."

Mr. Gantz's brow clouded. "Nothing—serious, I trust?"

"Might be. Might not be."

Mr. Gantz moved his chair nearer, and with an abrupt setting down of his plate and glass made evident his scorn of material things in the face of human affairs. He sat a little forward in his chair, his searching dog's eyes on Mrs. Tossie's face. "Yes?"

"Doctor says she's tubercular. I don't much doubt it. Peter was. You don't remember Peter, do you?"

"Your dear husband? No, Mrs. Tossie, I have always counted it a bitter loss on my part that I never— No, Mr. Hapton had—gone to his rest—fully three years before I came here."

Gone to his rest! Again Mrs. Tossie saw the night-shirt and the little patient slab of stone.

"I'll be going next," she said, unintentionally aloud.

"What?" Cheerful amusement shone from Mr. Gantz's face. "What morbid thoughts have got into your head this beautiful day? First your poor daughter—who is at this very minute, I have no doubt, in quite excellent health—then yourself—"

He laughed soothingly, and fixed her with an earnest gaze.

"Think, Mrs. Tossie, of the good things of this earth—of your pleasant little house, with its garden, of your friends, your church, your daily round of tasks—surely you take great pleasure in all these things?"

Now, thought Mrs. Tossie, was the time to speak of that inner fear which had been crippling her of late. Why not, after all, rest a little in this person, this staunch embodiment of all sons, who really meant no harm? She let her hand crawl along the arm of her chair, so that she would have the feel of something familiar. She put her head a little to one side, to indicate waywardness.

"No. I don't know that I do!"

"Now, Mrs. Tossie!"

A passionate longing came over her to weep, as she used to weep when she was a little girl.

"You'd be surprised to hear me say it, Mr. Gantz, but I don't take much pleasure in anything much—lately. I guess it's since my children grew up and married, and— No," a terrible frankness came into her eyes. "No, it ain't that. I don't so much miss my children. I miss, well—fun. Not silly fun, you understand, like young folks like, but—just fun. Little things of my own, like. Presents. Oh, I get presents on my birthdays and things. I'd like to get presents when I wasn't looking for them!"

She tried to get past this eager self-analytical moment, because she saw him looking ill at ease, but she could not stop herself.

"Things come to me, you understand, when I sit here, thinking, alone. And I feel afraid. You'll think what a baby I am, Mr. Gantz, but I get afraid—"

"Come, come! This is pure morbidity, my dear Mrs. Tossie. I can't let you voice such thoughts! What can you fear? Have you not God's gracious promise—"

"Here's what I fear." The mention of God had momentarily checked her. "I fear that I'll never have any more fun in my life!"

"Oh—*fun!*" It was apparent that he was trying to keep out of his voice the scorn he felt.

"Well, look here," continued Mrs. Tossie, "for one thing, victuals don't taste like they used to. I don't take the pleasure I once did in a good peach. I can't chew peppermint taffy, now, for fear I'll draw a tooth. I'm scared to eat popcorn, because I have an idea it's bloating in the stomach. And meat, with my rheumatism—"

"Ah! You lust after carnal things!" put in Mr. Gantz, pleased to get a foothold somewhere. "Well, that is not a cardinal sin. We can afford to let you have that little sin, Mrs. Tossie."

He laughed mirthlessly.

She scarcely heard him. She had her

mental eye fixed on a peculiar strip of roadway; peculiar in that its perspective was inverted; it was broad as the sea at the farthest end, but under her eyes it was like a needle.

"It seems to me as though I've never had anything *long* enough," she explained. "By the time I saw it, and knew that I had it and was getting around to having a little pleasure in it, it was gone. I've been pushed from behind all my life. Why—where is my life?" She looked at Mr. Gantz with pleading eyes. "Where's it gone? And how many minutes will it be till I'll go and join Peter? Tell me that! They'll be minutes you watch—although they might *look* like years!"

"One moment before you go on," said Mr. Gantz. "You ask me where your life has gone, do you not, Mrs. Tossie?"

He spoke slowly, tapping with his finger upon an arm of her chair.

"Then let me answer. Your life has gone—or, I should say, *is* going—to the building up of an upright Christian character, to the foundation of a good home, which has in its turn been the well-spring of two other good homes. Your life has been spent in fulfilling the teachings of Christ; you have taught Sunday School; you have contributed generously to the church; you have been a valuable member of your community. What more, my dear friend, could you ask? What more is there, by the grace of God, to do, in a lifetime?"

"But—but—" Mrs. Tossie caught herself about to murmur again about "fun." She withdrew to the back of her chair to nurse her thoughts. Something in Mr. Gantz's shining eyes brought her forward again to stare him in the face.

"You'll think I'm a crazy woman—but I'm going to have out my say, minister or no minister! Listen to me! There's lots more to do in a lifetime than what you say. You say that to make me feel good. Or maybe you really think it—I don't know. Well, I've lived a good, Christian life, yes! I've kept the commandments, yes. I've

lived meekly! I've tithed. I've been a good housekeeper. I've said my prayers, night and morning, for over fifty years. Well! Now I'm asking myself—and I'm asking you, too, Mr. Gantz—what's come of it all, anyway? What have I got, this minute, that I didn't have fifty years ago—except maybe stiffer hands and feet, and a grave to attend to, and chores, and letters to write—"

"But, Mrs. Tossie, you have, surely, the satisfaction of salvation waiting as your inevitable goal! Please—tell me—just what *do* you mean that you have missed, in your life? Not love or friendship. Not the inspiration of maternity. Not—although, really, in your present state of mind, I shrink from speaking of it again—not the joy of religion!"

A tear fell from Mrs. Tossie's eyes. Again she felt the impulse to give way to weeping. She saw the piteous picture of herself, a child, masquerading in a middle-aged woman's dress.

"I guess I'm kind of upset today," she said—"because of this rheumatism."

She hoped that Mr. Gantz would consider the conversation closed.

Tactfully he arose and put a steady-hand on her shoulder.

"Will you put this nonsense out of your head, then, Mrs. Tossie?"

She smiled at him with the expression of a hoydenish child. "Yes, Mr. Gantz."

He walked buoyantly down the flagstone. She called after him, "Look at how my sweet alyssum's coming up all around the edge, Mr. Gantz!"

When he had got out of sight Mrs. Tossie looked for a time at his empty lemonade glass. She picked up a cookie from the plate and began to crunch it. With her finger she pried open the *Daily Help for Daily Needs*, to August the Nineteenth, and read, self-consciously, in a rhetorical voice, the advice: "Let us keep sweet! In the midst of bitterness and of trial, when we are beset with temptation and surrounded by the waters of doubt and impiety, let us hearken to that low, anxious voice of our inner conscience, than which no truer friend can e'er be found. Let us answer temptation with the simplicity of a firm negation. Let us learn to say 'No!' It will stem every tide!"

"Cookies don't taste like they used to—I know that," said Mrs. Tossie to herself.



**A** WOMAN recovers more quickly from a love affair than a man does. Her sorrow is disappointment merely and not disillusionment.



**T**HE less a woman knows about some things, the quicker she learns.



**M**EN look backwards and forwards. Women look sideways.





# A Genius of the Busy Marts

By Arthur T. Munyan

## I

THE Sales Manager and General Executive of the Knickerbocker Insecticide Company reached his desk after a brisk morning walk at exactly five minutes to nine. A sleek youth with slim hands was busily opening mail with a slim paper knife, looking importantly into each envelope after he had removed its contents, and stamping each letter with the illuminating legend "RECEIVED." The youth looked up with a word of greeting, but the sales managerial mind was already preoccupied with affairs of deeper moment. Mr. Bradley made his way directly to his own inner office to his desk now littered with charts and sales projections, and became lost for the time being in contemplation of his empty wastebasket. From this, finally, he returned to the mail desk and standing behind the youth observed the completion of the daily ritual of sorting incoming correspondence. Some graceless and altogether uncouth scoundrel, chancing to look in upon the scene, might have experienced caustic ruminations on the necessity of sales managers. Little would such a one reckon the swift, keen brain behind Bradley's debonair exterior, the bold and brilliant intellect, tireless, incisive, scaling the sheerest heights of imagination during moments of seeming inactivity. Bradley himself admitted that some of his cleverest and most salient reactions came to him as he lay in bed waiting for sleep to overtake him.

Pausing at the door of the office occupied by the stenographers he noted that Miss Everett, his own secretary, was in and hastened back to his own

office to summon her by the button on his desk. The day's work was under way. Because all stenographers are demure, Miss Everett demurely took her place in an uncomfortable chair beside the glass-topped table and demurely waited for Mr. Bradley to begin the morning's dictation. But although he had, after a suitable interval, noticed her presence, he made no move to commence dictating; instead he sat ferociously examining the point of the silver "Alwayspointed" pencil in his fingers. It was, in point of fact, a habit with Mr. Bradley, always to fully collect his thoughts before speaking, and to have his letters clear, concise, and forceful. Suddenly looking up with the light of purpose in his eyes, he began: "Answering yours of the fifth instant, would say—"

It was a long letter, comprising four lengthy paragraphs in which he forcibly informed one of the salesman that it was his personal and official desire that said salesman should sell some more insecticides. In the first paragraph he stated the case positively, in the second he repeated for the sake of clearness, in the third he repeated for the sake of emphasis, in the fourth he neatly reviewed and summarized the preceding ones.

"Please make me a rough draft of that letter first, Miss—er—if you will. Now a telegram."

Mr. Bradley drew down his brows for the next effort. He rather prided himself on his ability to dictate telegrams.

"Am sending price list—"

He stopped.

"How many words is that, Miss—?"

Miss Everett slipped her pencil under

the elastic on her note-book, rose demurely, and departed for the regions where twenty typewriters clicked in gradually swelling pandemonium throughout the day. At the door Mr. Bradley arrested her: "Miss Everett! Tell Blake to come in right away, please."

Blake was one of the salesmen temporarily in the office between trips. He approached Bradley's desk jauntily, preserving that indefinable air of optimism even in the sanctum of his chief.

"The Winslow people have cut the price of arsenate of lead in my territory to twelve cents," he announced.

The remark, while scarcely one to chill the veins of the average reader, was patently of serious consequence to these technicians of commerce. Blake, vaguely defensive, dropped his eyes before Bradley's aghast expression.

"They have, have they?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, we'll just go them half a cent better. We'll show them!"

"Yes, sir."

"By Jove!" There was something very smart, very English about Mr. Bradley's diction. "We'll do nothing of the sort. We'll let them hang themselves with their own rope."

"Yes, sir. Of course we can't sell ourselves there in the meantime unless we meet their price."

Mr. Bradley's clean-cut face grew grave.

"Yes," he said. "Yes, yes. That is, no. Take the matter up with me again in the morning. In the meantime I shall see Mr. Sawtell."

"Yes, sir," said Blake. His voice was hushed, for to his ears Mr. Bradley's last remark had been: "Before I see you again I shall go up to the mountain top and commune with God."

During this amazing series of those instantaneous decisions that the high-calibred executive in business is so frequently forced to make, Mr. Bradley maintained his judicial manner, but with his mind once freed of the sudden load upon it he became more expansive, almost genial.

"I tell you, it's a great game, Blake!" he said. "Yes, sir, a great game, and we are going to put it across big this season. All pulling together; everybody putting everything they've got into it. I tell you, it's the greatest game in the world. And Blake! Let me tell you something." Here the Manager's voice dropped to a confidential whisper. "Your profession is the finest one in the world. And after all, selling, Blake, is nothing in the world but brains. Brains, Blake."

The Manager leaned back in his chair and looked at Blake for a full half minute, a smile of triumph playing about his lips. Then he gave a decisive nod, an inimitable gesture at once inspiration and dismissal.

One crowded hour after another, Mr. Bradley sometimes told himself. Right now, the factory was falling down on shipments of Knock-Em-Cold, the Knickerbocker Corporation's specialty bedbug killer. He must get Stevens, the works manager, on the phone right away. "Get me Stevens," he barked into his desk phone. But the factory was at that instant calling Mr. Bradley. "Yes, this is the Knickerbocker Company," the operator was saying. "Who's calling, please? Mr. Stevens? Just a moment, please, Mr. Stevens. Hold the wire, please. Mr. Bradley? Here's Mr. Stevens, Mr. Bradley. Go ahead, Mr. Stevens."

"Hello. Is that you, Stevens?" A pause. "I say, Stevens, do you people out there know that the bedbug season is on, or don't you?" Another pause while Stevens replied that he had been so informed, reliably he believed. "Well then, put some pep into it, will you. We need twenty thousand gallons, *right away*." More in the same vein. Sometimes it seemed to Mr. Bradley that the cares of the world rested on his shoulders, what with encouraging the salesmen, and bringing pressure to bear on the plant. The plant, for the most part, was the fly in the ointment; the manufacturing people the bane of his life. All they had to do was turn out the stuff when and if he wanted it, and

leave all the business to him and to the salesmen under him, and yet it was always the factory that gave trouble! Manufacturing men, engineers, chemists,—a lot of nuts. One way to handle them. "Stevens, if you can't get those orders out, by Jove, I'll come over there and do it! All right?"

Some day he would go over there and show them. What the lot needed was an element of intelligence out there at the factory anyway.

That reminded him of yet another matter to be disposed of. He must call in the chief chemist and get his advice on that new product they were just putting on the market. Flanders, the chemist, was a nut, unfortunately necessary to the organization, but none the less an out-and-out nut. He was forever talking about paradi-chlorobenzene, and explaining that alpha-naphthol and beta-naphthol were not identical, and otherwise making a complete and abstruse ass of himself. Bradley took considerable pride in the fact that he himself did know the difference between white arsenic and sabadilla seed. His business was selling the products; what they were made of and what they were used for did not concern him in the least. Now there was this chemist—

"The new Louse Chaser contains ten per cent. of—er—"

"Sodium fluoride," Flanders prompted him.

"Er—yes, whatever you call it."

"It isn't any eccentricity of mine," Flanders replied. "I call it that because that's the name of it."

"All right!" Bradley waved that aside. "And the other ninety per cent. is inert."

Flanders nodded.

"Well then, I intend to omit the statement of the analysis on the face of the label. All right?"

"No." An exasperating note of weariness in the other's tone. "If the thing isn't one hundred per cent. active ingredients it has to carry an analysis on the label. It's perfectly simple, it's the law, and it is reasonable on the whole."

"Then we must expose our formula!"

"Yes. We got it out of a Government pamphlet in the first place."

"Well, I think that is an outrage—a damned outrage!"

Mr. Bradley's ire was terrible to behold. When a strong man lets go his temper, it is no light matter. Mr. Bradley knew that to be an executive one must first of all have mastery over oneself, and it was accordingly infrequent that his anger rose. When it did! Well, when it did, that's all! He scowled at Flanders vindictively, but decided to drop the question until later. He had often found that if he dismissed some trying matter from his mind it was not long before some unexpectedly adroit solution of it came to mind. Moreover, it was luncheon time, and that afternoon his charts would need attention.

## II

THE charts were the joy of Mr. Bradley's day. Covering most of one wall of his office was a great sheet of co-ordinate paper marked off one way in thousand-dollar units, the other way in days. Each month had a jagged line, indicating the mounting value of the total sales up to the current date, that ran diagonally across the face of the sheet. These graphical methods were an innovation of Mr. Bradley's, and enabled him to show Mr. Sawtell exactly the trend of sales, past and present. To mark what the sales should be, the monthly quota in other words, a piece of black thread was stretched between two pins. It was always a hair-raising race between the meandering line and the black thread, but the line of the actual sales generally had the best of it.

That afternoon Mr. Bradley stood for a long, long time in an attitude of deep meditation before his charts. Yet look as he would, there was no blinking the truth inexorably set forth in geometric clarity. The black thread was undeniably, irrevocably above the line of achievement. Sales during the current month had fallen off dismally; the salesmen were not delivering the goods. No,

sir, they simply weren't putting it across this month. Once or twice before, this had happened, although the charts recording those ignominious periods had been taken down from the wall long ago, to make room for newer ones.

Mr. Bradley looked gloomily at the two-inch gap already separating, although it was only the middle of the month, the line of accomplishment from the thread of desire. By the end of the month if things kept up in the same way, there would be a four or five inch gap; Mr. Sawtell would be sure to extend the line in his mind's eye and foresee a disgraceful record two weeks hence. There was only one thing for it.

Carefully selecting another pin, Mr. Bradley slackened the thread and with the third pin bent it downward in the centre of the chart, leaving his current sales above scratch. Of course the plan made his remaining quota steeper, but what of that? In two weeks things might happen; or Mr. Sawtell might go out of town the latter part of the month. For several happy minutes the mathematician of sales projects viewed his handiwork—and found it good. Charts were certainly inspiring. There was something tremendously fascinating about having the very key to extensive affairs, big things, under one's very finger tips. Mr. Bradley liked big things; he hated pettiness of any sort.

Five o'clock! How the time does fly when a man loves his work. He had often spoken of the very thing in the little, man-to-man, all-the-cards-on-the-table talks with his salesmen. He was no clock-watcher, wanted no whistle-boys in his organization. His day was never over; there were always important things waiting his attention. Right away, he must get off a wire to Kingsley to close with that jobber for a big order of Bed Bugaboo. Big things, big things clamoring for his attention, and not hours enough in the day for him!

He rang for Miss Everett, and she came in after a little delay, her rather pretty hands free now from the smudges of carbon paper, her hat on, her hands

full of the impedimenta which girls carry about between office and home. Under her arm she carried a magazine, and as she sat down to transcribe his telegram, she laid the periodical upon his table.

His eyes roved idly, as his mind groped for the proper phrasing of the telegram, and fell upon the magazine. *Power of Mind* was the name of it, and it was of the inspirational type of literature which he highly approved for his employees. He dictated the wire, and Miss Everett went out of the room to type it and call a messenger. In her absence he casually picked up *Power of Mind* and glanced interestedly through its articles, for the most part eulogies of successful war profiteers. In the middle of the book he came to a page headed: "How Intelligent Are You?" With the faint smile that one sees on the face of a consciously beautiful woman unexpectedly encountering a mirror, he turned down the page and started to read.

The article was a chatty discussion of mentality tests extensively used by bureau statisticians in culling and sorting the cannon fodder brought in by the draft. It included a number of the tests themselves, rather carefully selected to interest without insulting the possible reader. Captivated, he read and read. Miss Everett returned with quadruplicate copies of the telegram, and he turned from his studies to approve it, then asked:

"Would you mind lending me this book until tomorrow, Miss Everett? An article just caught my interest. Thank you very much. An excellent book, I should say. Good night, Miss Everett."

The girl was gone, leaving the General Executive alone to self improvement.

He skimmed through the simpler questions and came down eventually to the more difficult ones, those more worthy, he felt, of his steel. The experiment amused him hugely; he, the brilliant producer with demonstrated ability in the greatest profession in the

world, testing himself for intelligence, painting the lily white! He laughed softly to himself, his fine sense of humor deliciously provoked by it all. Here was one, now, that they allowed you twenty minutes to solve: *"By the evidence contained in the text itself, point out the absolute falsehood of the following story:*

"A gentleman goes to church with his wife one warm morning in summer. During the sermon, which is rather a long one, the lady fans herself with the fan she has carried, while her husband, gradually becoming drowsy, falls asleep with his head drooping forward and his shoulders bent downward. In his slumbers he dreams that he is a royalist in the days of Danton and Robespierre, and in the course of his dreams experiences many adventures and escapes, finally arrest and sentence to the grim death so freely meted out in those dark days. He is led to the guillotine, blindfolded. He is told to kneel. He feels his throat upon the block. Now he is waiting from one anguished second to the next for the knife to fall. A certain spot on the back of his neck burns and cringes. At the precise moment of this suspense his wife perceives his neglect of duty, and turns in the pew to awaken him. She taps him smartly on the back of the neck with the edge of her fan. The shock to his tense nerves is so severe that he is killed instantane-

ously. Note: It is a fact known to physicians that such a shock will cause death."

Twenty minutes, eh? Oughtn't really to take the time, but no doubt two or three minutes would be enough for him. Let's see, now? Get your brain trained on the thing, old man. First place, a man probably wouldn't be going to church with his wife on a warm day in summer. That wasn't it, though. Well, by Jove, that sort of thing wouldn't kill a man, whether the medicos said it would or not. No sense to the thing, no kind of a thing for a sensible man to be spending his time on. Fifteen minutes wasted already; but call it ten, because he had stopped thinking back there to light a cigarette. Confound it, there was nothing wrong with it; probably the proofreader had made a mistake and left out the part that was queer. Let's read it over again, now, carefully. A man gets into the habit of skimming things through from long training at being able to take in the whole contents of a letter at a glance. In a thing like this a man has to examine every word; probably some little tricky solution hinging on a single word. Forty-five minutes! Mr. Bradley closed the book with a vicious slap. A fine lot of hokum, that sort of stuff! Well there was one thing about it: tests of that sort had absolutely nothing whatever to do with a man's intelligence. He had proved that.



WHEN a girl tells you she'll think about it, you might as well stop thinking about it.



MOST happy marriages become extinct when the company leaves.



# Impossible People

By Arthur Saville

**C**OAT-ROOM girls who are overcome with fits of giggling while checking my hat . . . plumbers who shave themselves with my razor, use my hair tonic, bathe in my tub, and then send me a bill of \$117.80 for repairing a leak in the shower . . . octogenarians who dance the "Chicago" with seventeen-year-old manicurists . . . night-watchmen who mistake me for a burglar on my return home at three in the morning and almost club me to death . . . health-hounds who are continually inhaling, exhaling, taking cold baths, thumping themselves on the chest and telling me that I should exercise more . . . moving-picture ingénues who profess to believe in Santa Claus and the stork . . . song-writers who rhyme "hug" with "love," "dream" with "queen," and "dearie" with "near me" . . . dinner hosts who serve white grape juice with a serviette wrapped about the bottle . . . Lithuanian wash-

room attendants who mutter inarticulately when I fail to tip them . . . dentists who mistake me for someone else and pull the wrong tooth . . . clairvoyants who can tell what I am thinking about . . . tight-rope walkers who, disguised in civilian clothes, leap to the stage from a box and proceed to execute their act, during which they strip themselves of their outer attire, revealing tinsel lavender tights . . . professional scandal-mongers who whisperingly announce the discovery of the remarkable phenomenon that as a result of two people having been married for ten months, a child is born . . . admirers of trained fleas, three-handed bridge, patent cigar-lighters, T. E. Powers, non-alcoholic vermouth, pamphlets on fortune telling, lustre crockery, side whiskers, outing expeditions, convention banquets, diamond shirt studs and telephones disguised as hoop-skirted dolls.



**W**HEN a man doesn't believe in men, he is a skeptic. When a man doesn't believe in women, he is a cynic.



**Y**OU can tell a man's prospects by looking at his chin. A woman's by looking at her ankle.



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# The Nietzschean Follies

IX

From the Breviary of a Nihilist

By Benjamin De Casseres

I

## *The Inextinguishable Impulse*

EVERYTHING tends to become mythological. Every fact aspires to be fiction. Every truth has in it the inextinguishable impulse to become a beautiful lie. Even in language itself is this true. There is a mythology of words: hyperbole, metaphor, simile. The whole Olympus of figuration and imagery in language—what is it but the aspiration of intelligible sound to seek the domain of the myth, to glitter immortally in its Asgard? The impulse-to-unreality is a profound universal law, true of everything animate under all conditions. If we knew the psychological scaffolding of animals we should no doubt find this same law in them in germ; also plants and the barely conscious forms of sea-life. *All things tend to become other than they are.* This is a world-formula extracted from the great world-formula of Jules de Gautier that man is dowered with the power of conceiving himself as he is not.

II

## *Aspiration*

I do not desire to become a reality, but a myth. If I told you I had committed every crime in the calendar you would smile and say I lied, because I am posing, or I am vain, or I am imaginative, or I am imitating Byron or Baudelaire, or some one of the

rowdies of literature. But the jest lies here, O gentle reader—the jest, inviolate and unpublishable in my soul of souls—that in the last analysis you do not *know* whether I am lying or posing, whether I really have been guilty of every sin and crime and perversity or not; and so I leave you puzzled, sneering, believing, scoffing by turns; and *that* is the cause of the eternal giggle that you hear from my tomb. Not that I am guilty or guiltless, but that your little noodle is puzzled perpetually—that is my *chef-d'œuvre*, a bit of my instinct-to-tease-and-tortue.

III

## *Time and Eternity*

IN using the word Eternity there has always been the connotation of something *opposite* to Time. Any thing being other than in time is inconceivable; it is transcendental abracadabra. Hence the rolling of the eyes and the other physical scenery and accoutrement of mystical humbug. Eternity is the endless prolongation of Time; incessantly recurring minutes. Eternity *is* Time—it is the word we use to express our inability to conceive an end to succession, not the opposite of it.

IV

## *Four Mystics*

THE greatest Jews were Christ, Spinoza and Heine. They were cruci-

fied in one manner or another. There never has been any great Christian—in the Christ sense. Mahomet was the founder of a religion who died scot-free. That is because he brought, not a philosophy or a supernatural message or a great poem into the world, but because he brought a sword. He knew the race; he was the Machiavelli of mysticism.

## V

*That Which Is Hidden*

THE profoundest thought is related to its hidden factors, its potencies and possibilities as I to the infinite. Hence, whatever we think about anything is erroneous. All the "puzzle" of life comes from the implicit faith we have in consciousness, observation and reasoning. The moment we come to believe firmly in Chance, Fate, Destiny, the Unknown, all the "puzzles" vanish. The tragic paradox gives way to the comic paradox, or at least to the humorous paradox. Curiosity takes the place of astonishment and we take ourselves *cum grano salis*.

## VI

*Life as Appearance*

LIFE, to me, is of secondary importance. It is only a tabulated verification of my literary, artistic, metaphysical and psychological prejudices. Life is only—for me—a footnote to Literature; a monstrous palette on which to lay the colors of my dreams, sensations, loves and antipathies. "Living" is, to me, a vacation, a diversion, a reaction from the exhaustive work of the inner life. If Life is not like some great book, some great picture, it has no value. I mingle among people, take my bath of reality, for the same reason that the crowd go to the "movies"—as an "aside," a reaction from the pursuit of the beautiful in literature, art and thought.

## VII

*The Last Journey of Pride*

You are at the end of your agony. You cannot suffer any more. A numbness moves over your consciousness like an eclipse-curtain over the face of the Sun. You walk, and walk, and walk. Woman cannot calm. Liquor cannot dull. The years pelt you like stones. Your thoughts mob you with slungshots. The people that pass you are ghosts. You are walking, walking, walking to the summit of Pain. Beyond this walk there must lie death or insanity—or a rotten drunk. There is a hollowness in your head and heart—floorless abysses of the *Numb*. Then a thought rises like a living thing from the deeps of one of those abysses. It is this: you are being "tried." It is a proof, a test, a gauntlet. Supreme and last triumph of egotism—that thought; the last journey of Pride. The poultice of ice on your wounds. And you roar with laughter.

## VIII

*Review of a Show*

THAT life is a spectacle, a show, a tragic vaudeville created for me—and for me alone—there is no reasonable doubt in my mind. Science—pure rationality—will not allow me to budge an inch from this view. This panorama that lies in perspective radiating from my consciousness—my unicity—is egocentric. Psychological Ptolemaicism is the rigid scientific side of Romanticism. The world, its values, its scenery, its colors, its combinations, its motives, change with the evolution of my consciousness through the years. My special temperament, my special plexus, my special liver, brain, stomach, blood, evoked this special Show, gave it a personal meaning, untransferable, inalienable. No one will ever see this Thing again as I have seen it; no one ever saw this Thing before as I have seen it, felt it and *dominated* it. Because I am I this Spectacle is *mine*. It is wrought in me; it sends me personal,



secret messages in a code the key to which is my inmost character. And it will die with me, collapse like Prospero's dream, disperse like a mirage into a leaden cloud. Others will build *their* Spectacles, but *mine* is inviolable; a golden treasure walled up with me at the moment of death that will defy all adventurers. The Play that I saw is the Golden Fleece that no Jason will ever find. No one will ever paint that dream on the canvas of Reality as I painted it; no one will ever find those strange colors and eerie lights that I used. Others will create more wonderful, more beautiful, more subtle, more terrible projections; but they will not be *mine*. And so I shall lie down and wrap around my soul the universe, a marvelous shroud emblazoned with runes and ciphers and hieroglyphs that carry in their depths my special secret, my special vision, my special critique of the marvelous little wakefulness that I have called, for want of a better and more adequate word, MY life.

## IX

*Neutrality*

PONTIUS PILATE was the first great neutral; having washed his hands of the whole matter, he then went to his broker's and invested in crosses.



POPULAR man—one who knows a whole lot of after-dinner stories and doesn't tell them.



## X

*God and Witch*

WHEN a man becomes a hermit he becomes something of a god; when a woman becomes a hermit she becomes a witch.

## XI

*The Yawn as Metaphysic*

I HAVE written a number of books, but what have I said that could not be uttered in a yawn? In fact, I have analyzed my Yawn, my special perpetuate Yawn, and translated, sublimated, that physical phenomenon into words. I have put that Yawn born at pubescence under the microscope, spectroscope and X-ray. I have made the Yawn dance, weep, laugh; at times the Yawn is lyrical, dithyrambic; at other times it thinks and moves up from the metaphysical arcanum in paced and measured motions. The Yawn is my metaphysic, my lever, my instinct-to-do and my instinct-to-loaf. My writings might well be called the Saga of a Yawn, the Epical Adventures of a Yawn. My Yawn is Logos, the Word, the Egg in the nebulae of my being. My blood, heart, brain and genitals yawned (at puberty) before Time, Eternity and Circumstance; and my rapture in the presence of Beauty, Power and Sex-Love is the hosannah, the jubilee, the cosmic hymn of the Great God Yawn.

# The Parthian Shot

By Dashiell Hammett

WHEN the boy was six months old Paulette Key acknowledged that her hopes and efforts had been futile, that the baby was indubitably and irremediably a replica of its father. She could have endured the physical resemblance, but the duplication of Harold Key's stupid obstinacy—unmistakable in the fixity of the child's inarticulate demands for its food, its toys—was too much for Paulette. She knew she could not go on living with *two* such natures! A year and a half of Harold's domination had not subdued her entirely. She took the little boy to church, had him christened Don, sent him home by his nurse, and boarded a train for the West.



## Eye Moons

By Georgie Carneal

YOUR eyes across a whitened table's world  
Are rims of moons burned blue  
That bid me follow laughing where you lead  
Through vines that hang on you.

I know now you have covered a full light  
With purple poisoned shade,  
For I would cut your curious quietude  
With jagged bits of jade.

New moons make laughter. Half a moon is but  
An interlude of lies.  
And yet I dare outvoice your silver song  
For full moon's paradise.

Two full blue moons lie mystic in your eyes  
Rimmed out with silken wool.  
The dream is done. You've seen the heart of me:  
A simple man, a fool.



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# The Romance of Old Port Shane

By *Victor Thaddeus*

## I

**A**T forty-three years of age Mr. Quirk retired from business, sold out to a chain-store company, and shook the dust of Hooperstown from his feet.

In heart and fancy he was free at last, and could satisfy his yearning for romance. The whole world, with its seductive mysteries, lay before him. It was no longer necessary for him to open the doors of the store in the morning, to stand behind the counter all day, to close at night. Now he could live.

First he must visit the national wonders. He spent a year in travel. He went to Niagara Falls, the Yellowstone Park, the Grand Cañon, California. At the expiration of this peripatetic period he found himself desiring a peaceful spot, remote from the world. A friend told him of Old Port Shane, where his small income should suffice for an ideal existence, close to nature, undisturbed.

Mr. Quirk liked the name. Old Port Shane. An old town in decay, he was told, with abandoned houses, neglected streets, and wharves crumbling to ruin along the George River. A town where life moved in a dignified, leisurely manner, and good dinners were served. A town, suggested the friend, where a man who had made his pile might marry a sweet maiden and live cheaply on the fat of the land.

"You're looking for romance," said the friend. "In that old town you will have it by the tail. No commercialism."

Mr. Quirk blushed. He had a vision of black eyes glancing down at him from green-shuttered windows.

That night he thought the matter

over. His travels had been a disappointment; nowhere had he secured the firm hold on romance suggested by his friend. He had not enjoyed his adventures. Sedentary life had fattened his paunch; and physical exertion annoyed him. Descending bright angel trails, burro-back, puffing about Pike's Peak to gaze at sunsets—experiences encumbered with such gross physical discomfort and mental anguish could not be real romance.

He had a vision of sweet, gentle faces—fried chickens on platters. Old Port Shane. Fishing boats. Peace. A little house.

It was time for him to be settling down somewhere.

The following evening he arrived in Old Port Shane.

What hotel to go to? No regular hotel in the town, said the station agent. The place for him was Mother Bacon's, two squares away—on the river. Soon Mother Bacon was bustling around him. Her mother, old Grandmother Bacon, hobbled to his side, and told him that everyone came at last to beautiful Old Port Shane. Her daughter showed him his room.

Mr. Quirk looked out of his window. Beneath him a negro was swabbing the veranda. The daughter had gone. Not bad-looking, he thought. Dark eyes, a quick manner. Thirty, perhaps.

"You intend to make a long stay in our town?" said Mother Bacon, when he came downstairs.

"If I like Old Port Shane I shall make it my home," answered Mr. Quirk, solemnly.

Mother and daughter were in the room. All three women smiled. Grand-

mother Bacon gave a little cackle of delight, and tapped the floor with her stick. Mildred arranged her hair. Mr. Quirk took pleasure in watching her deft fingers. Mother Bacon's hands were rubbing one another—red, shining, motherly hands. It gratified Mr. Quirk to notice the effect of his announcement. A phrase came into his mind; the bosom of a family. This seemed to be it. And here he was, comfortably installed.

After supper he walked along the river front. There was no doubt about the decay of Old Port Shane. River trade had moved to Charlesville, down river. He saw the abandoned houses, touched with his own hand rusty iron fences, spear-topped; his feet trod down the vegetation of the neglected streets. Silence prevailed. The smoke of his cigar made little patches in the still air behind him. It seemed incumbent upon him to move quietly.

He came to a driveway with iron gates. One gate had fallen from its hinges, and lay half-buried in the long grass. The house beyond was evidently deserted. It had been abandoned a long while. But there was a path trodden along the driveway; a path lightly beaten down, that might have been made by a single person coming and going occasionally.

Trees partly concealed the house, but Mr. Quirk was intrigued by glimpses of green shutters, white columns. He felt like an adventurer when he stood under the portico, peering inside. He went from window to window, pressing his hands and face against favorable openings where the shutters were torn. Nothing inside. Dim, vacant rooms; dim, unornamented walls. He sat down.

He could see the ocean. The sun was setting, and the channel of the river shone red. Here and there he saw tiny red sails, a pillar of blood-black smoke. The sea had fiery scales; the horizon stretched to right and left in immense glowing perspective. He squatted there, breathless, the smoke of his cigar rising like incense above a god.

He had eaten a good supper. He had walked slowly. His mood was comfortable, receptive. The panorama, in its gorgeous immobility, seemed enchanted. He felt a vague, beautiful yearning.

There was a patter of feet beside him on the veranda, like water slapping the shore. A voice said:

"Love! Love! Ah, what a night for love! I have had many loves."

The voice hesitated—then continued, hushed, breathless—

"There was a king here once—"

Love! The word thrilled Mr. Quirk, for he knew that it stated his yearning. Magical, romantic love. That was what he wanted. Suddenly, before his eyes, he saw Mildred's face. This beautiful voice, rich, throbbing with emotion. . . .

He was afraid to look in the direction of the voice. He could hear his heart beating. Had love sought him out in this enchanted place? A hand touched his shoulder. He turned his head and saw withered fingers; he looked up into the face of an old woman.

It was a queer, eager face, incredibly wrinkled, with great, glowing eyes.

Mr. Quirk rose to his feet. The old woman's eyes were on a level with his own. Her frame was tall and gaunt. She was bareheaded, her white hair rising above her forehead like a scroll ochred by time; a red shawl covered her shoulders, her bare feet were slippered. Mr. Quirk's embarrassment gave way to a feeling of awe and mystery. He stood tense.

"—a king here once. Did you say there was a king here once?" he asked in a low voice.

"He was my lover," said the old woman simply. "I am the Countess Mathilde."

Never had Mr. Quirk felt as he did now at this moment. A king—the Countess Mathilde. Her voice was deep as a man's, but rich in emotion, red, translucent as a ruby. When she spoke again, and he sat looking over the fading water, he seemed to be floating in an impalpable medium that was the very essence of love and passion.

"What is youth without love?" asked the Countess, and his thoughts flew exultantly to Mildred. "Here we lived together. Yes, there was a king here once, but now he is dead."

She gave him a proud glance, and added, with a stately gesture:

"I am still here, wearing the beautiful clothes he had brought over the ocean for me in ships flying like birds with wide, white wings—silk, satin, these pearls—" and she touched the glass beads around her neck.

Mr. Quirk was shocked; he understood now that the old woman was queer. She beckoned him to a window, and, against his better judgment, her earnestness compelled his further interest. The hall of mirrors, she said, the great ballroom. Peering at her side, he saw nothing but broken glass on a dusty floor.

She talked on. Love. Mr. Quirk found himself hanging upon her words, her revelations. She had had many loves. As he listened he remembered his friend's crude way of putting the matter—remembered it with a feeling of triumph as he considered that the man who lived here with the woman he loved *would* have romance by the tail. By the tail—helpless—his forever. He trembled, thinking of Mildred as he had last seen her, smiling at Mother and Grandmother Bacon.

He watched the moon rise. Suddenly he realized that night had fallen, that the Countess was a shadow beside him, her voice a voice coming to him through darkness. Now she was silent; he heard the patter like water slapping—she had disappeared. He walked back to Mother Bacon's Inn.

## II

A CRAZY woman, said Mother Bacon. Who had come up from New Orleans with a bad reputation, added Grandmother Bacon. And ought to be put away somewhere, said Mildred. Her real name unknown. A secret. A dark secret, added Grandmother Bacon. Probably Murphy, suggested Mildred.

Lived in a cabin on the outskirts of the port, said Mother Bacon. A dirty cabin, added Grandmother Bacon, tapping the floor with her stick to give emphasis to the adjective. One that didn't belong to her, said Mildred, smiling at Mr. Quirk, and patting her hair.

"Countess Mathilde!" scoffed Mother Bacon, "*Countess Mathilde!*" cried Grandmother Bacon, furiously. Mildred sniffed and ran her hands down her hips, saying nothing.

Mr. Quirk stood immobile, enclosed by the triangle. The Inn was quiet; the three other lodgers he had seen at supper had disappeared. A door opened—the negro passed like a shadow down the hall, off the porch, gone. No one of the three women stirred. All at once he realized that this was a wonderful family, one of the kind of which there were so few nowadays.

Grandmother, mother, daughter. He saw a hieratic resemblance in their features; the patriarchal granddame, the robust mother, the dark-eyed daughter. Three generations; sympathetic, loving, thoughts in unison, hearts beating as one. No dissension of opinion, no argumentation. A united household.

Grandmother, mother, daughter. Three generations. Suddenly he trembled. A fourth? Grandson, granddaughter. A tiny voice in his innermost being—Father!

Two points of the triangle vanished, one tapping the floor, the other marching with urbane heaviness; he stood alone in the living-room with Mildred. An invisible line linked them, a straight line, the shortest distance, along which he might rush headlong into her arms.

Voices out of the distance.

"Quite a while since a real congenial couple come together in Old Port Shane!" Mother Bacon.

"Ten years since two young folks come together in real *romantic* wedlock in *beautiful* Old Port Shane!" Grandmother Bacon.

But Mr. Quirk scarcely heard them—he was scared. He heard only words—romantic—beautiful—Old Port Shane. He caught himself snuffing querulously.

His hands stung—and that phrase rang through his agitated brain. Romance by the tail—if he could only summon up the courage to reach out and grab it. But he was backing away, afraid, as though it were guarded by barbed porcupinal plumes. He broke out of Mildred's presence into the solitude of his room.

He locked the door and sat down on his bed. Moonlight was on the floor at his feet. His clothes seemed taut to bursting; he felt himself throbbing from head to foot. He threw off his outer garments, and leaned from the window, where the night air might cool his face, and reason might return to calm his panic and counsel him wisely.

His hands, white in the moonlight, took on a symbolical significance; now he understood. All his life he had dreamed of romance, but he had never handled it, as he had drugs, brushes, combs, candies, soft drinks, dollars and cents; what he needed was experience. Experience, that was it; once he had that he could reach out his hands and take firm hold.

He would make a point of seeking out the queer old woman, the Countess, and listening to her experiences. He would steep himself in her tales, and thus prepare himself to go to Mildred. What did it matter that she was out of her mind as long as she could fan the flame of romance in his bosom?

Romance. His romance. Mildred's romance, too. The romance of the third generation. The romance of Old Port Shane. He clenched his fists and vowed that the girl should be his. He repeated a sentence aloud, for the sound of it stirred his blood.

"There was a king here once—"

That night, his first in Old Port Shane, Mr. Quirk made his plans. He jotted down the principal points, after the fashion of store memos.

1. Listen to Countess, and enter into spirit of romance.

2. Study habits of Mother and Grandmother Bacon, with view to entering family like son.

3. Make further inquiries concerning George River Mansion.

4. Tip black boy.

This was his guide during the following weeks. It seemed to him that Mildred would not be averse to his courtship; but he made no advances, persevering in his decision to control his emotion until the hour was ripe. Nor did he reveal to any member of the family where he disappeared to in the evening.

He was careful, in fact, to conceal his movements. After supper he would stroll down the street in the direction opposite to that of George River Mansion; then, as the twilight deepened, he would follow a circuitous route around the port until he stood before the driveway. He stole up to the portico. There he listened to the Countess Mathilde.

A queer old woman. But he liked to listen to her. From her, as from a rich storehouse, poured memories of love; her voice rose and fell, swelling and contracting the gloom that shrouded everything with seductive mystery. One night she brought with her a small box.

"In here are the king's letters," she said, holding it before his eyes.

Mr. Quirk saw nothing. The box was empty. He scraped about with his fingers. He did not wish to encourage the Countess in deliberate nonsense. So he said:

"I see no letters."

"Of course not!" exclaimed the Countess. "How could you see them?" She laughed indulgently, as at the forwardness of a child. "They were written to me."

Despite himself, Mr. Quirk stared into the box again. The box was certainly empty, but from it rose a faint, sweet perfume that made him sit quite still, staring at the moon, while the voice beside him throbbed, telling fabulous tales. Though he knew they were fabulous, that the old woman was quite crazy, yet they gripped him.

Castles, kings, palaces—a land of moonlight—love. If she was quite crazy, she was quite harmless also. And

her gentle, beautiful tales were what he needed. He knew they were saturating him with the spirit of romance—and when he was saturated then he would be fit and the hour would be ripe for him to grapple with the body.

Sometimes he became impatient. This reaction would come to him as he was walking home alone, and lead him beneath Mildred's window. There he stood, impatient to experience love. Burning kisses, perfumed hair, tender sighs—of these the Countess had told him in her beautiful voice, and he had a mad desire to burst into Mildred's room and satiate his senses with these delights.

One night desire overcame him. With trembling fingers he furtively pushed open the door of the wrong room. Moonlight was on the bed—he saw a white face. He tiptoed toward it, protruding his lips. Closing his eyes, he stooped, and kissed Grandmother Bacon. Fortunately the old lady slept. But Mr. Quirk slipped from the room, thoroughly sobered, rubbing his lips.

A bad taste seemed to linger there. This imagination made him indignant against himself, as he felt that he was being unkind to Grandmother Bacon, and she should be dear to him. Soon he would be calling her Grandma like Mildred, would be giving her a kiss in the morning when she got up, and one at night when she went to bed. There would probably be others, as she was an affectionate old body, and often put her hands on him now, before he was yet a member of the family.

She had a way of drooling he found unpleasant.

He knew it was wrong, but he shrank from the thought of her kisses.

Likewise with Mother Bacon, whose red face was always covered with perspiration, and whose hands were slippery. He had noticed her kissing Mildred. Her mouth made a gurgling sound, as though charged with an excess of saliva. Afterward she gulped.

Two of the three women seemed always to have their faces together.

Worst of all, it hurt him to see Mil-

dred in the embraces of Grandmother and Mother Bacon. He wanted her lovely face for himself. There were times when Grandmother and Mother Bacon disgusted him. True to his program, he had studied their habits that he might be the more congenial; but his observation had been unfortunate—while he knew that he could give his whole heart to Mildred, he was beginning to doubt more each day whether he could bestow sincere love upon her parent and grandparent.

He had seen Grandmother Bacon, who helped in the kitchen, putting mashed potatoes on his plate with her fingers.

Mother Bacon put her finger in the soup to determine whether it was fit for the guests.

Mr. Quirk's seat was facing the door. It had pleased him at first to see the dear old people working together, while Mildred served. Now he sat with his eyes glued to his plate. And he did not relish his food as of yore. It troubled him to think that he was not enjoying his meals. One day he was startled to discover that he had lost weight.

### III

THIS discovery spurred him to action.

He bought George River Mansion, and got repair work under way. The furniture had been sold at auction years before. He was not sorry about this; a beautiful house and a beautiful view were desirable, but in furniture comfort seemed to him the most necessary quality. He furnished it anew, with this idea in mind. He had the driveway cleaned, the gate put back on new hinges, the shutters mended and painted, the grass cut, the shrubs trimmed, the windows washed, the cess-pool given a thorough overhauling.

The superintending of all these operations imbued him with a sense of dignity and power. He paced the grounds with his hands behind his back, clad in a white suit for which he had sent measurements to a mail-order house. Here he halted to give directions, there

he paused to suggest a detail overlooked by the workmen.

At last all was completed. Mr. Quirk's heart sang within him as he made the rounds, and saw that all was ready for the bride. He drew a deep breath; then slowly clenched his fists. The moment had come when he was ready to take hold. No more would he hold himself in control; that very night he would commence his attentions to Mildred.

Romance. The romance of Old Port Shane. That's what people would call it. He knew there had not been a real honest-to-goodness romance in Old Port Shane for ages. He would show them—

He stood under the portico a moment, then went inside for a last inspection. He had bought a blue-enameled kerosene stove as an auxiliary to the kitchen range, and he touched this fondly, conjuring up a vision of Mildred's flushed face hovering over fried chicken and sweet potatoes, her dainty fingers clasped by his own. The drawing-room was furnished with padded rockers, a davenport and tables. A player piano was on the way from Palestine, Missouri. Two of the six bedrooms were provided with beds and bureaus. He had closed up the rest of the house.

Again he stood on the veranda. He could scarcely believe that it was true. Here he was lord of a manor that had cost him less than a semi-detached house in a suburb. Here he was ready to come to grips with romance at last. A stray cat appeared on the veranda and rubbed itself against his leg. Absent-mindedly, following his thoughts, he lifted it from the ground by the tail.

The tail drew itself from his hand. The cat was gone. Mr. Quirk gave first-aid to his fingers. The incident depressed him for a moment, but his exuberance returned. Suddenly he stood defiant, as though shielding someone who stood close beside him. Chivalry straightened his shoulders, clenched his fists again.

For the hour had arrived when he could be truthful with himself. He knew now that, notwithstanding their

virtues and fine sentiments, he *disliked* Grandmother and Mother Bacon. He must get Mildred away from them as soon as possible. He could see her deft fingers skimming her hair. Sweet, dainty Mildred. In the sordid company of the two older women he felt that his great romantic passion must inevitably perish.

He looked at his watch. Time for supper. He hurried over to the Inn.

For the first time in many days his old healthy appetite was with him. As he entered the Inn he smelt fried chicken. He listened. It seemed to him that he could hear crackling sounds in the kitchen. His appetite grew as he washed his hands and face and brushed his hair. It seemed appropriate that tonight he was to have a good supper.

He descended the stairs, humming. A benevolent feeling had succeeded his belligerent attitude; he realized that, after all, these things that he disliked in Grandmother and Mother Bacon were little human weaknesses, that a really broad-minded man should be only too willing to overlook to see the honest, simple virtues that had made the country what it was today.

He sat down at his table, radiating cheerfulness and benignity. When he saw Mother Bacon wiping her red face with a greasy towel he was able to make allowances. He smiled. Dear, motherly soul! It was more difficult for him to relish his soup after a fleeting glimpse of Grandmother Bacon preparing creamed carrots. Suddenly he saw the wing of chicken that Mildred was bringing him slip from the plate and drop to the floor. A cat darted forward.

Quite plainly he saw the cat standing there with the wing in its mouth. He could see both its eyes and its whiskers. Now Mildred had cuffed it away, and was arranging the wing on the plate again in an appetizing position.

"Give Mr. Quirk more gravy, Ma!" he heard her say in a loud voice. "Mr. Quirk likes gravy."

A moment later the plate was under his nose, steaming, fragrant.

Mr. Quirk pushed back his chair and



rose heavily. He stood face to face with Mildred. He looked her squarely in the eyes, probing her soul. Within him some important organ seemed to have suspended its functions—he was a man in a daze. The germ of a thought, of a picture, began to expand. He fought desperately to overcome it, to dominate himself by the mood of romance that came to him when he listened to the old crazy woman.

"Here stands romance!" he shouted silently to himself. "Seize it! Take her in your arms! She is beautiful—your heart's desire—your great romantic passion!"

But his senses were apathetic to this command. When he tried to lash himself into action by the memory of that sweet, subtle perfume which hung around the rosewood box in which the poor, deluded Countess imagined the King's letters to be, he found himself recoiling instead from the smell of a coarse, cheap scent freely used by Mildred. He noticed that her face shone like her mother's, that her eyelids were red, that she had drooping clusters of hair at the corners of her mouth, that her lips were thin, and her hands wet. For the first time he remarked a greedy look in her eyes.

And now, Mother Bacon entering the dining-room, he saw that same look in her eyes also. He saw it in the eyes of Grandmother Bacon, who peered from the doorway—three generations of greedy eyes fastened upon him. The picture germ grew to gigantic life.

He saw himself hanging to an immense fish-tail, slippery as Mother Bacon's hands. The fish-tail was slipping through his fingers. Suddenly an immense fish-head swung around and bit him, while the tail, breaking loose, scratched him furiously like a cat.

This was what he had escaped. Life had set a snare for him, a man-trap. He rushed from the room and gathered together his belongings, thinking of George River Mansion as he did so. The sun was setting. From his win-

dow he could just see the driveway in the distance, climbing the hill in the evening light. A great joy filled him.

A great determination also, for at last he understood himself. The chatter of the three women as he paid his bill was wasted upon deaf ears. Mr. Quirk did not hear them. They seemed to be far away from him already—three ghostly generations of the dim and distant past. In a calm and dignified manner he went about the business of effecting an immediate transfer of his baggage from Mother Bacon's Inn to George River Mansion.

He walked from the Inn with a brisk, vigorous step. The air was cool and fragrant. He stopped at the butcher's and bought a chicken—a young chicken suitable for a fry. He bought other provisions. When he stepped into the kitchen of George River Mansion his arms were full.

He lit the kerosene stove and buttered the frying-pan well. The halves of the chicken he rubbed carefully with salt and pepper. Now the butter foamed in the pan, and gently, tenderly, he lowered the chicken.

As he received the first mouthful from his fork, a deep sigh of contentment escaped his lips.

Twilight came: he sat on the veranda in a large, soft chair, his hands reposing on his stomach, which rose and fell in long, grateful heaves, his eyes half-closed. The animal within was satisfied. . . .

Now—

He heard the soft flap-flap of the Countess Mathilde's slippers.

Tonight Mr. Quirk noticed a man walking in a furtive manner behind her. This man, it seemed, had come at the request of the community to investigate the condition of an old crazy woman, living on property that did not belong to her. He showed Mr. Quirk a petition, at the head of which Mr. Quirk saw the signatures of three generations of Bacon.

Mr. Quirk tore up the paper; then sought fitting words.

"The lady is under my protection," he said, with a gesture. "She lives here with me."

The man disappeared into the night as though hastily recalled by invisible agents of black magic.

Then Mr. Quirk sank into his chair again, while the Countess Mathilde sat beside him, leaning forward, her crazy eyes shining toward the distance. A faint, sweet perfume drifted into his nostrils, and he took the box from her hands.

The moon was rising.

He sat staring at it, tense, breathless, triumphant. And before his eyes there seemed to flutter a great, gorgeous creature, part moth, part bird of paradise. It fluttered before him because he was holding it firmly by the tail; he was triumphant because he knew it could never escape, breathless because it was so beautiful, and tense because he was waiting—

The Countess began:

"There was a king here once—!"



## Character Study

By John Torcross

ONE hundred and sixty-three pounds. Five feet ten and one half inches. Dark brown hair brushed straight back. Steel-gray eyes. Smooth shaven. Sallow complexion. Lantern-jawed. High cheek-bones. Carriage, erect. Movements, graceful. Lengthy, even strides. Bat-wing collar, black silk scarf, pearl pin, braided morning coat, striped gray trousers, patent leather boots, spotless linen, a sprig of jasmine in the buttonhole. General manner, one of superiority. Held in awe by not a few. A creature of a great city. A modern type.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Ladies' underwear? Third aisle to the right, if you please, Madam."



## Platonic

By M. G. Sabel

LET us be quiet together,  
Now that the day has ended,  
Let us be part of the silence  
Of moonlight under water . . .



# Portraits and the Painter

[*A Critical Essay*]

By *Albert Bloch*

## I

PORTRAITURE in Art is as dead as the secret of Palissy. As dead as the art of the Symphony in Music. And yet symphonies are still being composed; portraits are being painted by the thousands today. Why, despite their undoubted passage, these two should continue starkly to walk the earth, in their burial ceremonies as it were; why they refuse to remain decently dead instead of drearily haunting the scenes of their erstwhile glory like a pair of vain, disconsolate ghosts, is a difficult question.

There is no sensible reason why they should: for our spiritual and æsthetic needs they have given us all they had to give. They died and left us their immortal issue—a numerous and wonderful progeny in each instance. The symphony came to an end with Bruckner; Manet was the last of the portrait painters. When Manet died in 1883 it was the end of portrait painting. It had long been at its last gasp, but his genius delayed the inevitable while it could. And there was no necessity, indeed, after Manet was no more, that portraiture should still struggle on in the field of painting. Not only was there no one after Manet worthy to continue the work—there was actually no longer any work that wanted continuing: because the art of portraiture had lost, or was about to lose, every practical reason for being.

Portrait painting, whatever its ultimate æsthetic interest and importance,

has always been primarily a utilitarian art. From the very beginning it served a purpose, as indeed all the figurative arts were originally “applied” arts in the finest and highest sense. And it is therefore not an accident that the earlier portraitists were not only all of them excellent workmen, but that indeed most of those whose production has come down to us of the present day attained to a very high degree of artistic perfection. They had, quite really and concretely, a deeper justification for being what they were: tradesmen and handicraftsmen, and, given the indispensable postulate of intellectual personality, Artists. . . .

People wanting portraits of themselves required not a picture, that is to say, an organism of compositional art—however welcome and highly prized this must have been to the more discerning patron—what was demanded first of all was a faithful likeness of the sitter; and the painter was as subserviently considerate of the former's personal wishes, of his little vanities and special inclinations as is the fashionable portraitist of our own day—with only this curious and significant difference: that with all his concessions—however he might crowd the picture with seemingly extraneous detail—so supreme was his craftsmanship, so natural and essential his artistry, that the finished thing could not, even while fulfilling a patron's last and least requirement, result other than good. The portrait painter of earlier times supplied a positive need; the

portraitists of good society in our era might perchance have been artists as well as clever (or brilliant) workmen, if their trade had not happened to outlive all necessity for it.

If, then, the art of portraiture has from its beginnings served an avowedly practical purpose, what else could be reasonably demanded by people whose countenances are destined to endure upon canvas as types of our busy and progressive and fiercely enlightened phase, but a simple likeness: a likeness rather flattering than otherwise perhaps (whether in facial traits or dignity of bearing), but an honest likeness for all that—coupled with technical bravura, *à la* Sargent (or whoever happens to be the popular portraitist of the moment): a faithful record of features to be handed down to a curious posterity? (For the descendants of this age have undoubtedly a right to know what sort of faces were in fashion among their forebears;—and yet, dared one but hope that, having gazed upon the physiognomical hand-me-downs of the present epoch, they might incline to regret not having been left in ignorance, the rise of a generation so austere critical, of such evident high qualities of heart and mind could, after all, console one for having been born into this.)

All that is asked, then, is a record, a faithful, simple record—or not so simple—a likeness above all things else, but a likeness nicely and tastefully done . . . and so the Lenbachs, the Sargents and the like have had an easy, pleasant time of it, the while parvenues from Chicago, Berlin or Manchester signed cheques for large amounts. But for the childlike superstition that a portrait from the hand of some loudly-trumpeted mediocrity carries with it a certain tiresome distinction, lifting the one portrayed automatically into the ranks of the bourgeoisie aristocracy, there is scarce a doubt that the unburied remains of this poor dead art would, by now, be definitely at rest.

## II

No one, certainly, can seriously object to a portrait resembling the sitter. But there are likenesses and likenesses. Latterly our modern portrait painters, having run out of genius, have, where their gift was just insufficient for mere superficial reproduction, fallen back upon psychology. Now psychology in portrait painting is sheer silly trifling; an impertinent prying to discover what may lie behind the mask of features presented to the painter; the idle curiosity of a child, poking a finger into the sawdust economy of a doll.\* Psychology is not, so far as I have been able to determine, a branch of pictorial art; a place is claimed for it, I believe, in modern literature; and its scientific function, one may agree, is fairly apparent. But in portrait painting not even the best work of a few really clever and (in a sense) interesting exponents of the Paul Pry method can be justly esteemed as Art, although it might properly be hung as reference documents on the walls of some university lecture-room.

However, there is a quite legitimate form of interpretative portraiture which should not be confused with the toying of the pseudo-psychologists. Here the painter contents himself with presenting a simple, if very personal, impression of the sitter, without strain or affectation. Here likeness is certainly sought and achieved; while in a few rare, happy instances the achievement so far transcends the personal interpretation, that the beholder is constrained to regard the thing done not at all as a portrait merely, but as a picture, as a work of Art: a living organism, quite independent and separate from the model that, as it must then seem, just "happened" to be sitting to the painter.

\*Quite recently, and long after this little essay was written, I found my view of the matter confirmed and (however unconsciously) endorsed by the late Mr. Henry James in a story called *The Liar*.

The "portraits" of such painters as, for example, Renoir, van Gogh, Whistler at his best, and—as perhaps the extremest case in point and the only instance of the younger painters that occurs to me at the moment—the Viennese Kokoschka, all force this view upon us, so perfect is the sheer artistic expression attained. The personal impression is there too, assuredly: likeness is never absent; but it is not, with these men, as though this had been the thing primarily striven after—it is rather as if it had crept in somehow, quite incidentally, as an accident almost. But that is just the point that bears out my contention: these pictures, likenesses though they may be, are no longer portraits as the word is understood and accepted by the public at large. And yet they are among the only examples of painting during the last generation or longer, which, being based upon a portrait motive, must be judged and recognized as Art. From which it would truly appear, that Art and actual portraiture have come to be incompatible terms.

I may here, parenthetically, speak of my own occasional work in portraiture, which may be classed (if it be worth classification) with such work of the interpretative painters. My object was never other than the rendering of a quite personal impression of the sitter, and in those rare instances when it has been my fancy to paint a portrait, the poor sufferer who had felt so flattered at being asked to sit could really not complain of a want of likeness—rather the contrary, oftener than not. But then I have always painted portraits—when I have painted them—as an occasionally welcome change and relaxation from more important work, and, moreover, as being splendid exercise.

It has never entered my mind, however, to build the thing up into a picture, and I think I have never, while wrestling with a sitter's features, bothered my head about a compositional problem. In the two, or at most three, cases when the effort has really resulted in a picture, *i. e.*, a work of com-

positional Art, I myself have had, at least consciously, very little hand in it; and have always been as surprised at such a result as the sitters invariably were after I had done with them.

However, I am no portrait painter, thank Heaven! and I but cite my own scattered excursions into this field as one excusable instance, and further, to illustrate my argument. For here is work that some would not hesitate to consider good, worthy portraiture, while I know it to be nothing of the kind. . . .

That such a master as Cézanne, on the other hand, should have left behind him many "portraits" means no more than that he was too truly an artist to exclude himself consciously from any mode of expression within the scope of his medium; for to any close observer of his work it must be apparent that his chief interest in this field of painting lay not in presenting or solving a physiognomical problem, or even, often enough, in producing anything at all like an acceptable resemblance to the sitter. A quite cursory acquaintance (such as mine) with his numerous compositions for which Madame Cézanne was the sitter, will show that not only are no two of these alike; but that actually, so far as resemblance goes, each might very well have been painted from a different model.

The classical instance here is, of course, Rembrandt, the supreme master of portraiture. He was continually painting his own portrait; and the very fact that he so often chose himself as a model seems clearly to show that his purpose must have been less to reproduce faithfully his own features, than that, chancing to catch himself in one mood or another, and at a happy moment of creative animation, he naturally seized on so auspicious an instant to make a Picture: to express the mood that then possessed him. How many of his self-portraits really resemble one another? Not even between portraits of himself painted within short intervals of each other is there much conformity of outward likeness. And of

one or two it seems almost impossible to believe (remembering the others) that Rembrandt was indeed the model. Certainly the Rembrandt type is fairly obvious in most of them, and even if the picture were not marked as a self-portrait we would have little difficulty in recognizing it as such; but the arresting thing is none the less, that in no case—not even, it may be inferred, where the model was another than himself—was the artist merely concerned with placing upon canvas a sober and "actual" likeness of his sitter.

And this is true of Cézanne, and in like degree of van Gogh, whose various portraits of himself, all painted within a period embracing the last few years of his life, are extraordinarily divergent, and whose portrait by Gauguin bears practically no resemblance at all to the self-portraits. Cézanne's sitters seem never to have been more to him than a quite superficial stimulus. Just as a few apples, an earthenware dish or two, and an old cloth of whatever pattern, thrown anyhow over a table, could, and did, inspire him to marvels of expression; so, too, the utterly commonplace countenance of Smith or Jones, haply catching the Artist in a susceptible mood, will suddenly draw forth a picture perhaps already adumbrating in the painter's soul and only awaiting the appearance of the most casual object to give it form and contour.

An empress can conceive by a lackey, and there is little enough credit to Smith or Jones surely, if he happen to be by at the moment of the Artist's susceptibility. On the contrary, good chap that he is, he is glad enough to be of use, and takes it as a high compliment to be asked to sit. And when, finally, the exhibited canvas is called for convenience's sake "Portrait of Smith-Jones, Esquire," it need be no more a portrait of Smith or Jones than of Brown or Robinson. The thing has no individuality at all except the Artist's. (We do not, I take it, stand before the Munich portrait of the Emperor Charles V, wondering how like

it may be to the original—it is probably very like, but who cares? What we recognize at once is that it is a wonderfully characteristic Titian.) And where, nowadays, the portrait of whomsoever is anything but the Artist's self-portrait, however fortuitously it may resemble the sitter, it is either the work of a psychological demonstrator, or it will belong to the output of a fashionable portrait painter.

### III

THE fashionable portrait painter is the Little Brother to the Rich par excellence. He exists to serve them, and it doesn't in the least matter that he may have become so popular that he can afford to snub a birthday-knight, or a cabinet member whose politics he disapproves, or even a Wall Street thimbligger. He has gone into portrait painting as anyone else goes in for law or groceries. Originally there was in him the urge to paint, precisely as there was in the late Bob Fitzsimmons the urge to punch. After a preliminary training at a native "art school," and the indispensable final polish of Paris, where the last necessary hints in good taste are acquired—such pleasing little vulgar refinements as the manipulation of high-lights, the handling of texture, a broad and facile brush-technique, the mellifluous disposal of drapery—he returns home, having been long aware that portrait painting will bring in abundant dollars, and is ready to welcome the trade. And presently we find him, *commis-voyageur* of the painting craft, smiling and purring at tea-tables, a week-end at this house, another at that, conversing agreeably in drawing-rooms, practising to please, pleasing to practice—with an eye ever alert for a commission, poor devil!

What a dog's life, to be sure!—And if he chance still to have a shred of soul left in him by the time he has won his "success," standing in the midst of life, his best years not yet

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gone—there must surely come now and again drear, dark moments, heightened, it may be, for awful seconds by a vivid lightning-flash of realization, throwing into sharp relief upon the background of his mood a vision of the sorry object he has come to be.

It must have been this type of portrait painter Goethe had in mind when he wrote, "We are never satisfied with the portraits of people we know. This is why I have always been sorry for portrait painters. One so seldom requires the impossible of people, but it is just these from whom we demand it. Their pictures are expected to contain an image of each separate beholder's own relations to the persons portrayed, his likings and aversions; the painter is required not only to present a sitter as he conceives him, but according to everybody else's conception of him. I do not wonder that such artists grow gradually callous, indifferent and obstinate."

Nor would anybody. But while such criticism of the public's very natural attitude toward portraits and the painter was perhaps reasonable enough in Goethe's day, when, if people would have portraits, it is evident that there was nobody to supply the want but the portrait painter; entirely to exonerate the popular painter of our own time to the disadvantage of his patrons would be an obvious injustice. It is not my concern to blame either, but both must be blamed equally if at all: the public for wanting portraits painted, and the painter for pandering to such snobbishness.

#### IV

AND this brings me logically to the nub of the whole matter—remembering always that the substantial reason for portraiture (at least on the part of the patron) has never been other than soberly utilitarian: the desire for a simple document or record. If this could have been obtained a hundred years ago, this attitude of the ordinary public toward likenesses of people

would have been impossible. And today one is hardly aware of any such attitude; for nowadays everybody, from high to low, has various portraits of himself, thoroughly reliable likenesses, and everybody is pleased with them.

The physico-chemical process, which, for want of a more precise term, is called Photography, has been brought, during the last quarter-century, to such perfection, that it is an utter mystery why people otherwise sufficiently alive to the advantages of all modern conveniences should enter voluntarily upon the martyrdom of being portrayed by hand. Leaving out of the question such very evident factors as vanity, snobbery and purse-pride (without which there could naturally be no fashionable portraiture, and still less—oh, Utopia!—any popular portraitists) it is still a matter for wonder that ordinarily common-sense people should—out of sheer good nature, apparently—give portrait painters commissions, when it would be a saving of so much time, patience and nervous strain to make an appointment with the nearest local photographer, and have the whole thing over in half an hour.

And as a matter of fact these people of course do, often enough, when they want a really satisfactory likeness of themselves, have recourse to the photographer:—which does not at all, as may superficially seem, weaken the argument, but rather vindicates it; for the painted portrait is, as it were, only a holiday adventure—although a tiresome one—while the photograph never serves any but a quite soberly practical object. Indeed, so conscious is the fashionable portraitist of his own inferiority to the camera as an acknowledged means of producing a resemblance to his sitter, that he often enough calls in the resources of this instrument to aid him. Lenbach, as a conspicuous instance, very frequently used photography, not as an incidental guide merely, but, in his pot-boiling later years, actually painted over photographically prepared surfaces.

And if the photographer be but clever

enough, he can even induce the snobs to believe that the photo is a work of Art; can easily make them pay enough money for a few prints to ease their minds on the score of exclusiveness and to compensate them for the utter simplicity of the process. And when, in a little while, the process of color-photography shall have reached its perfection, their last vestige of plausible excuse for a hand-painted portrait in oils will have vanished. Then, if they still insist upon sitting to a portrait painter—and they will—they must drop all pretense that the thing on the wall in its carved and gilded frame is other than an expensive article of galantryware hung for a display of wealth in their homes—in quite the same sense as a somewhat more, or less, expensive bauble from a shop in Fifth Avenue or Bond Street, hung for display upon their persons.

A photograph of decent workmanship is commonly a by no means un-aesthetic object—to say nothing of its manifest superiority over most paintings in the essential detail of likeness to the subject—and the merchant-photographer, quite alive to the suggestions thrown out by the adherents to the photo-aesthetic cult (there is really such a thing!), and quick to perceive the commercial possibilities of the fad, can, through the ease with which a photographic plate may be manipulated, produce a print that must impose infallibly upon the naïve susceptibilities of the half-baked. (A photograph may be made very attractive if the operator, in posing his sitter, and the retoucher, in handling the plate, have taken a few hints from the old masters in portraiture, but more especially from the English etchers in mezzo-tinto of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.)

In such pleasant little trickery there can be no harm, certainly; and if those who pay for the articles choose to re-

gard them as Art, that is their affair: there is at least as much excuse for so regarding them, as for claiming the same high distinction for the grand majority of portraits painted during the last thirty years. It is only when the photo-aesthetes themselves are really sincere, when they take themselves and their toying seriously (and doubtless there are those among them who do), that there may be legitimate cause for disgust.

For the most part, however, this aesthetic drift in latter-day photography is at bottom only the simple old mercantile question of creating a demand and then supplying it, and as such is as innocent and justifiable as may be any other commercial scheme for laying hands on the public's idle cash.

The camera is a machine—therefore without subjective consciousness; and this is well. It has no personal bias, no point of view, no "outlook on life," and, unless the photographer be a quack, can make no pretense of being other than it is. It supplies a public need; and the man behind the tripod does an honest day's work and fulfills a public function so long as he does not fancy himself a portraitist, but remains aware of his limitations and of his place in society as an intelligent artisan-tradesman.

. . . But the Artist—ah, the Artist—may never more supply a public need, it would seem; for the world has outgrown his usefulness. His function, once so real, as a purveyor to the public, has long ceased. What valid reason is there for him today? He is a thing apart—and inutile; an anachronism, an anomaly, an excrescent abnormality upon a world run mad with sober sanity:—at best only a spiritual necessity to a scattered few. He knows no public. His is the voice of one crying in the wilderness. Heed his message or disregard it; accept his gift or refuse it—he can give only what he brings.





# The Unique One

By Yardley Dane

## I

MR. WORTHINGTON'S father was employed by the railroad in a clerical capacity. When but five years of age the boy was found under a plum tree examining the interior mechanism of a telephone receiver. Later, as a youth, he made electrical experiments with the lighting circuit that threw the town of Spragg into darkness for five minutes.

An interesting career was predicted.

He became a telegraph operator in the Spragg office of the C. B. Q. & St. John.

He was a blond young man with blue eyes and wrinkles in his forehead. He began to go with Lucille Huff, daughter of Peter Huff, owner of the Yellow Front grocery. They were married and had five children. One morning Mr. Worthington awoke to the realization that his early ambitions had not materialized; and he became worried about his future.

He decided to walk down to the river and talk to Hans Gottfried Schwartz, who lived in a cabin on the edge of the swamp.

Hans Gottfried was out. He sat down and waited. In a pen nearby, rabbits were dozing. Away from the exhortations of his wife and the shrill demands of his children, Mr. Worthington nearly dozed also. The spot was quiet; graciously benign. His worries left him as he sat there in the oblique evening light. Yet, intuitively, he was warned that it was just this feeling he must guard against.

He was thirty-six; the porch of his bungalow needed new planking; his wife spoke of deserting him. If she carried

this threat into effect he could think of no one who would keep house for him. He was still telegraph operator with the C. B. Q. & St. John.

While he waited for the return of the philosopher he tried to give these matters his serious attention, but his eyes were closed when Hans Gottfried arrived.

Hans Gottfried wore a black beard and dressed in black. He had an imposing manner, and the eye of a poet. In the town of Spragg he was respected as a man of wisdom. When boys set fire to his cabin one night he took up his staff and walked to the national capital to discuss the matter with the president; and, one morning, when buying stores from Mr. Huff, he had spoken in twelve different languages while the grocer was wrapping up some spinach for him and entering it upon his bill.

He had once lodged with the Worthingtons for a month, and Mr. Worthington had a high opinion of the old man's intelligence and learning.

Hans Gottfried seated himself on a box facing Mr. Worthington, and listened attentively. Occasionally he stroked his glossy beard. Once he wiped his entire face with a blue handkerchief.

Mr. Worthington found difficulty in expressing himself. His needs seemed obscure. He groped in the air with his fingers.

"There is something in me!" he said, positively, "But how to get it out—what do you think?"

Hans Gottfried's passive attitude had vanished. His eyes gleamed as he led Mr. Worthington to the rabbit hutch.

"You also are a rabbit," he said, "and

to succeed you must first become a Unique One."

And he gave Mr. Worthington a book to read which was entitled "The Ego and His Own."

At first Mr. Worthington could not understand what it was all about. Then, all at once, he seemed to discover the key, and he became deeply interested.

He began to hold his head higher as he went about his work, and whenever he spoke to his associates he endeavored to fix them with his eye first. He crossed the street slowly, indifferent to shouts, and horns, and the clanging of street-car bells. He eyed himself with interest as he rubbed the lather on his face when he shaved.

"All things are nothing to me!" he murmured one night, when his wife was attempting to draw him into a quarrel.

A few days later he was late for supper. The children were already at table eating. His wife advanced upon him from the kitchen.

"I shall leave you, John Worthington!" she concluded. "Take care how you abuse me! I shall leave you and your children some day!"

"The divine is God's concern," said Mr. Worthington, in a low voice, "The human, man's. My concern is neither the divine, nor the human, not the true, good, just or the free, but solely what is *mine*, and it is not a general one, but is . . . *unique*, as I am unique. Nothing is more to me than myself."

The following Sunday, when the baby suffered from bleeding at the nose, and Mrs. Worthington disputed the treatment prescribed by him, he was emboldened to say.

"Whether I am in the right or not there is no judge but myself."

He added:

"In consideration of right the question is always asked, 'What or who gives me the right to it?' Answer: God, love, reason, nature, humanity, etc. No: only *your* might, *your* power gives you the right."

He continued, with a smile, "More-over each and every inquiry after right

deserves to be lashed with Schiller's words.

*"Many a year I've used the nose  
To smell the onion and the rose;  
Is there any proof that shows  
That I've a right to that same nose?"*

Day by day he was feeling more sure of himself. The philosophy had inspired him; he saw life through new eyes, powerful as lenses. He realized the significance of himself as a self-conscious egoist, and the insignificance of all other things, which were as nothing to him. It strengthened him, as he sat in the office dispatching, to repeat to himself the definition of the Unique One.

"I am not an ego along with other egos, but the sole ego: I am *unique*. Hence my wants too are unique, and my deeds; in short, everything about me is unique. And it is only as this unique *I* that I take everything for my own, as I set myself to work, and develop myself, only as this. I do not develop man, nor as man, but, as *I*, I develop . . . myself.

"This is the meaning of the—*Unique One*."

It thrilled Mr. Worthington to think of himself as the Unique One. He saw the logic of being an egoist. Employers were egoists, kings were egoists, God was an egoist. Since all this passed away for him as soon as he died, it was absurd for him not to be an egoist himself.

He must assert himself as the Unique One, and defy the world. Eagerly he awaited his opportunity.

"Patience!" soothed Hans Gottfried. "The moment will come. You will be put to the test. Then it will be seen if you have the new strength."

Mr. Worthington smiled. Then he said, simply,

"I shall be ready."

## II

IT was a month since Mr. Worthington had made his first visit to Hans

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Gottfried, and the opportunity for him to assert himself as an individual and self-conscious egoist had not yet presented itself.

He sat on the bed in his room, looking at his face in a hand-mirror. That night he and Mrs. Worthington and the children were going to a movie.

Mrs. Worthington rushed in to him. She was dressed, with her hat on. She asked him why he was not ready, what he was doing. When he told her that he had been looking at his face she gave a loud laugh and left the room.

Mr. Worthington ignored her behavior. During the past few minutes he had discovered qualities in his features that he had never imagined existed there. His chin was strong, his eyes fine and luminous. It was the face of a remarkable man. Of a philosopher. Of the Unique One. His hands trembled a little as he drew on his trousers.

A fine old phrase rang through his brain. Proclaimed from the housetops. He would like to proclaim his uniqueness, the uniqueness of every man, from the housetops.

To assert himself in his own household, or in the office, seemed to him trivial and unimportant. That would come afterward. After the public demonstration that would open the eyes of his friends, associates, and the general public. He yearned for this demonstration to take place. When would it be vouchsafed him?

The front door banged. His wife had left the house with the kids. He hurried after her.

They arrived at the theatre. He bought tickets. The feature film was in progress. Music played softly. As he breathed the warm perfumed air Mr. Worthington experienced a peculiar swelling sensation. A cavalier swaggered across the screen waving his rapier.

"No seats!" said the female usher, "You'll have to stand up awhile."

Mr. Worthington brushed her aside. "Come!" he ordered his family, "Follow me!"

And he marched down the aisle at the head of them.

A voice in his inner being had told him it was not possible that every seat in the house was taken. As he walked down the aisle it seemed to Mr. Worthington that the screen was a mirror, and he saw himself swaggering there with plumed hat, defying the world. The picture could not be a coincidence. His moment was approaching. He had paid for seats, and if there were seats in the house he would find them. He would take no woman's words on this matter.

His quick eyes peered sharply to right and left. Suddenly he saw an empty seat. It was in the centre of the row. No matter, he would push his way through. On the aisle sat Hans Gottfried Schwartz.

Hans Gottfried rose and barred the way. Then Mr. Worthington knew that the moment had arrived. He drew a deep breath. It was the crisis of his life. And he was ready.

He stood there face to face with his teacher, deaf to the old man's mutterings, and to those of the audience.

Never had his brain been clearer, his apprehension more shrewd. Standing there with clenched fists and gritted teeth, he saw the world and the people in it in their true light. All had been stripped naked for him. It was a selfish, cruel world, every man for himself. The strong devoured the weak, and were in turn devoured. Hans Gottfried Schwartz was with friends, and they were reserving the seat for someone.

Like a hydra-headed monster the audience was growling at him. Well, he would growl back. He would force his way to that seat and sit there. Let his wife and family look to themselves.

The moment had come for public demonstration of the tenets of his faith.

As the Unique One he must combat fearlessly the prejudices of the selfish mob. Suddenly he realized that Hans Gottfried Schwartz was nothing but a selfish old man who was trying to make him ridiculous in a public place, and that the audience was trying to drive him away from a theatre to which he

had come for an evening's entertainment.

And he refused to be driven away.

"They say of God, 'Names name thee not'" he cried, in a loud voice. "That holds good of me also; no concept expresses me, nothing that is designated as my essence exhausts me; they are only names. Likewise they say of God that he is perfect and had no calling to strive after perfection. That too holds good of me alone!"

Then he seized Hans Gottfried by the beard and discharged him into the aisle. He pushed his way roughly by

the people who half rose to hold him back. A great triumph surged through every fibre of his being as he reached his destination.

A moment he faced the screen, standing. The cavalier was waving his plumed hat in a fade-out. Mr. Worthington could not restrain his emulation. A shrill cry escaped his lips. He waved his hand in farewell. Then he sat down.

He struck the floor with a thud that resounded through the entire theatre. The seat had been removed for repairs. They had been trying to tell him this.



## Chanson Ambigue

*By George O'Neil*

A CROSS the vista of the long lagoons  
The shadowed-images of fourteen moons  
Quiver wan silver in the rigid ponds  
Darkened by circles of the lily fronds.

Behind the ilex in the antique bower  
Satin is luminous . . . a brittle shower  
Of laughter shivers through the velvet leaves . . .  
Cuckoos awaken in the laurel sheaves.

Come to the orangery and gather gold,—  
Suns that have died and now are smooth and cold;  
Taste what you will among such fruits as these,  
Planets of silence on exotic trees . . .

Fourteen moons are in the garden here,  
And statues whispering and laughter queer.  
And a certain bird is on a certain bough . . .  
Come to the orangery and gather now. . . .



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# A Boy's Best Friend

*By Thyra Samter Winslow*

## I

TRACY ALLEN kept his eyes on the clock or on his nickeled watch almost steadily from five o'clock until seven that Saturday. It was warm and close in the store and he always got tired of working by the time Saturday came. He wanted to be prompt in meeting the boys.

Tracy worked in the Hamilton Shoe Store in Morrisburg. He had always lived in Morrisburg. He had left school when he was a high school sophomore in order to go to work. He could have kept on going to school if he had wanted to, for his father had a steady position, bookkeeper in a wholesale grocery establishment, and at that time his brother Harry, who had since married and left Morrisburg, was living at home and contributed to the family support, as did his oldest sister, Mary, who was married now, too.

The other boys of the crowd had quit school and Tracy's mother had told him so many times how lucky it was that he could stay there in idleness while the rest of the family worked—that finally he was glad enough to stop when the end of the term came. He had not been at all brilliant in class, but the teachers had always liked him because he was good-natured, even if lazy, and hadn't had any sort of a mean streak in him. He had tried half a dozen jobs. Finally he had got the job in the Hamilton Shoe Store. He was not quite as dapper or obliging as the other clerks, but he did very well. He was especially good at waiting on men, and was well liked by the farmers who came into town on Saturdays.

Tracy was nineteen years old. He was a tall boy with legs of unbelievable length. He walked with an uneven, almost a shambling gait and he was always stumbling uncertainly. From a distance he looked almost as if he were lame. He was too thin, though he was in fair health. He smoked too many cigarettes for one thing and did not take much wholesome exercise. He had even, rather good features, a mouth a trifle too large, a straight nose, rather light gray eyes. His hair was light, too, and was just getting over the unevenness of boyhood. By brushing it hard he was able to get it to lie almost smoothly. Just now he thought he was being quite up to date because he parted it in the middle. He had a good, rather innocent face, with shadows a bit too deep under his eyes. His eyelashes and brows were light and a trifle uncertain.

On week-days the store closed at six. In winter, on Saturdays, it stayed open until well after nine in the evening, but in summer seven o'clock proved a profitable closing hour. Because it was a particularly warm Saturday in August, Tracy had hoped that old man Hamilton would close the store a little earlier, but he didn't. He puttered around, asking questions, looking into shoe boxes, pushing them into even rows on the shelves.

"Who does this package belong to?" he asked, and "Did that Beasley fellow call for his shoes this afternoon?" Tracy was glad when Hamilton finally exchanged his black alpaca store coat for the coat of blue serge that went with his suit and left for home. Five minutes later Tracy called a "so long"

to Happers, the bookkeeper, who locked up, and was on his way.

All the way home Tracy whistled to himself, tunelessly, almost soundlessly. He took long shambling steps and didn't mind the heat or the gray dust of the streets. He was in a hurry to get home. It was after seven already. He had told the crowd he'd meet them before eight. He and the fellows had a date with some girls. Tracy's date was with Leah Foster.

Leah Foster was spoken of by careful Morrisburg mothers as "no earthly good." There was really nothing more to say about her. She lived on "the other side of town," which was a social curse in itself. Morrisburg was dissected by its business street, called for some unfathomable, not in any way descriptive reason, Broadway. North of Broadway lived the people who were of importance in the town, tradespeople and their families, the families of what professional men Morrisburg could boast. South of Broadway were rows of dingy workingmen's cottages, cheap rooming houses for the laborers who were always "working on the road," the negro district and the homes of the even more disreputable white women.

Leah Foster was not as disreputable as she might easily have been in order to fit into her location. In spite of the fact that there existed a Commercial Club, a Morrisburg Chamber of Commerce and a Boost Morrisburg Club, with its attendant mottoes, "We'll double our population in five years," and "Watch Morrisburg grow," there existed across Broadway, well known to anyone who cared to know about such things, a district of the very lowest sort, a startlingly well-lighted row of cheap dance halls and houses of prostitution. Of course, the men of Morrisburg did not or were supposed not to visit these houses "down on Third Street," but they were winked at by the clubs and officials of the city because they were supposed to bring business from the surrounding country. Farmers, workers on the railroads and clerks from even smaller places near by

were supposedly brought into Morrisburg and subsequently into the business district by the attractions Third Street and "the other side of town" offered.

Leah did not live in nor near Third Street, though she well knew of its existence. Her mother, whose own reputation had been none of the best but who now had descended into uninteresting shapelessness, kept a rooming house in Lucas Street. The rooming house was patronized by men mostly and quite largely by foreigners. They were on the whole rather a harmless lot but looked uncouth and undesirable. Their occupations made them rough—or their roughness made them search out their present occupations—at any rate they were swarthy and unclean, with fierce looking mustaches, oily skins and hair, and rather unpleasantly smelling clothes. At night, sometimes, they sat in front of the rooming house, one of them with an accordion, the others singing an accompaniment or playing cards. There was a street lamp on the corner.

Leah had gone to the public schools until she reached the eighth grade, when, rather well-developed for fourteen, she had assumed grown-up ways, and ended, quite suddenly, her formal education. She was eighteen, now, a brown-haired girl with brown eyes and a broad, almost expressionless face, which would grow heavy and sullen in a few years. She used too much rouge on her rather flat, high-boned cheeks and she seemed to be frowning constantly when her face was in repose. Her figure, already starting to grow fat, at eighteen was only pleasantly plump, though her breasts were rounded and well developed. Leah's older sister, Esther, had eloped to the city, a few years before, with a traveling salesman, and nothing more had been heard of her since, save a vague whisper that "Esther Foster has gone on the stage." Leah Foster had "gone with the boys" since she was thirteen and no one questioned, in any way, her moral or social status.

Tracy Allen had known Leah by

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sight for years. A couple of months before she had come into the Hamilton Shoe Store to purchase a pair of cheap, high-heeled slippers and Tracy had waited on her. He was surprised to find how easily he had been able to talk to her. Tracy had always been a bit bashful around girls, especially those his folks thought he ought to be nice to. Shortly after that, with Ted Simmons, at the Airdome, where they show motion pictures out of doors in summer, he had seen Leah and she had smiled at him. She had been with her chum, Ruth Mayfield, a pretty little blonde. The boys joined them and treated them to sodas at the Palace. After that, Tracy met Leah several times and took her to various inexpensive places of amusement. He knew she was "fast" and while he had no objection to fastness, he had made practically no advances first, because of his uncertainty as to what might be pleasing to her and then because of an inclination toward a cleaner, more youthful type of romance. He knew he wasn't in love with her, but he thought her a jolly girl, and he wanted to show her a good time. He had been taught so carefully by his mother that going with anyone except nice girls was a sin that the time he spent with Leah Foster seemed doubly pleasant.

## II

HE reached the gate of his own neat home now and hurried up the walk, letting the gate slam behind him. His mother was on the porch.

"Good evening, Tracy," she said in her thin, though pleasant enough voice, and then, "I wish you would be more careful about the gate. It would take just a moment to fasten it so it wouldn't slam. Ever since you were a child you've let doors and gates slam. You know how it get on my nerves. You really are old enough to remember such things, Tracy."

"Yes, Ma," said Tracy and went into the house. He hung his straw hat with its colored striped band on a peg of the

carved oak hat-rack which stood in the hallway.

His mother followed him into the house, closing the screen with special care behind her.

"Your supper is on the table, Tracy," she said. "I wish you'd eat as soon as you can. I don't want to hurry you, but it makes it so late when you get home at seven. We finished over an hour ago."

Tracy washed his hands a trifle carelessly at the kitchen sink and dried them on the roller towel which hung on the kitchen door. He went into the dining-room. His mother was there, preparing his plate. There was potato salad and slices of cold ham, some yellow cheese cut into squares, preserves and a dish of stewed blackberries.

His mother sighed.

"We had some peas, too," she said, "but Clarence and Laura managed to finish them. They wouldn't have been good cold, anyhow." Then, "Your father went over to Bramson's to play cards. I thought perhaps you'd like to go to the Scotts with your sister and me."

Tracy, starting to eat, stopped.

"Why, Ma," he said, "I—I would like to, but I got a date with the fellows—I—if you'd mentioned it sooner—"

His mother was seated across from him, her hands on the table. It embarrassed Tracy to be stared at so steadily. His mother was a little woman with keen blue eyes, much deeper in color than Tracy's. Her hair had been light but now it was a mixture of light brown and gray. She had a determined chin and a petulant mouth.

"I might have known," she said. "If I—if your mother—asks anything of you, it's always too much trouble. You'd rather run around with a gang of rowdies and with—with women—than to escort your mother and your sister any place. Not much pleasure I get out of my son."

"Now, Ma," he soothed, "if it wasn't for the date I'd go, honest, I would,

but it's Saturday night—I promised—"

His mother went on as if she hadn't heard him.

"Going with women will do terrible things to any boy. I suppose that's the length and width of it. Mrs. Clements told me she saw you with—well, with an awfully peculiar-looking girl a week ago. It's odd that a boy of mine, whom I've brought up carefully, can't go in the crowd with his sister but must go with the riff-raff of the town. Perhaps if I spoke to your father—"

"Now, Ma," pleaded Tracy again. He felt uncomfortable, but he didn't know what to say. He knew that his mother objected to a lot of things. She didn't like the noise made by the chums of his brother Clarence, who was sixteen. She had objected to Harry's friends, but Harry was married and away from home, now. She had been annoyed with Mary, too. His sister Laura was twenty. She didn't get quarreled at. His mother liked Laura's friends. He knew she was anxious that Laura get married and was always smiling at and flattering Laura's young men callers.

He finished his meal hurriedly, listened to his mother's account of his shortcomings, wiped his mouth and left his napkin unfolded. He forgot all about it until he heard his mother's voice as he was starting to mount the stairs.

"You might at least have taken the time to fold your napkin. Now, when other women are resting, I've got to go into the hot kitchen and finish with the dishes—"

Tracy wanted to suggest that she leave the dishes until the morning, when he would do them, but he had suggested that before and he knew the answer—dirty dishes would draw ants to begin with and "the next day has its duties—if you would go to church with your mother and sister and brother you'd please me a thousand times more."

In his room, which he shared with Clarence, who was not at home, Tracy washed up and changed his collar and

tie. He fingered his ties carefully. He had only a few, anyhow. They hung from a rod on a burnt-wood placque that his sister Mary had made a number of years before. He finally decided on a blue tie with a watered surface and red dots. His hair was smooth and damp. He brushed a bit furtively at his suit and wiped his shoes with a worn-out pair of trousers which he kept on the floor of his closet for that purpose though his mother was constantly threatening to get rid of them.

In the hall on the way out he met Laura. She was like his mother, little, full of energy, with bright eyes and a too-mechanical smile.

"Going with us, Trace?" she asked.

"Can't go," he said, "got a date. Didn't know you expected me until Ma said so, just now."

"It's nothing in my life," admitted Laura. "I don't know that you add anything to the gayety of the party or my pleasure. Only there's a couple of vacant lots to pass and you know Ma. Going to call for us? . . . Well, never mind, then—there may be someone else to see us home. You may be sorry, though—Grace said Sally Rogers might be there—"

Sally Rogers was a silly girl Tracy had gone to a couple of parties with, in high school.

"Sally Rogers gives me a pain," said Tracy, inelegantly.

"You would say that," said his mother, who had appeared at the door of her bedroom. "It fits in nicely with your character. A fine, well-bred girl like one of the Rogers girls would be the sort to give my son 'a pain.' Oh, well, I don't know that we can expect more than that from our boys, these days."

He ran down the stairs, grabbing his hat from the hat-rack.

### III

At the drug-store at the corner of Broadway and Elm Street he met the boys, Ted Simmons, Lucius McGaffey and Horace Wells. Lucius McGaffey



was fat and short. The other two were tall, over-grown boys who had not yet reached maturity but who seemed definitely too long of arms and legs.

They greeted him with affectionate insults and the slang of the day. They went into the drug-store and bought several packages of Camels, joking with Bob Hanson, who was one of "the gang," but who had to work Saturday nights. Then they went out and stood in front of the drug-store. The girls were to meet them there, later. They would not have asked girls from their side of town to meet them on a public corner, but they knew that Leah and her friends didn't expect anything better. They busied themselves by talking in slurred undertones and then laughing loudly. They said things they considered clever about everyone who passed, including the Harders' dog, fat and wabbly. With a great flash of brilliancy they agreed the dog resembled all of the other Harders. They drew philosophical conclusions—"Yes, sir, you can tell folks by their pets—pets grow to look like the folks they live with—yep—every time—"

They took a walk down Broadway, first in twos and then all four abreast, marching to a tune they all whistled shrilly, compelling everyone but old ladies—whom they felt they treated with great respect—to get off the sidewalk for them.

At nine they were in front of the drug-store when the girls arrived. Leah had with her her best friend, Ruth Mayfield, and Ella Murray, a new girl in Morrisburg. They divided, Tracy with Leah, of course, Ted with Ruth and the other two boys with the new girl. They were just in time, as they knew they would be, for the second show at the Apollo.

They stood in line, first, pushing and laughing. Then they filed into the darkened motion-picture theatre. Sitting quite far back, in spite of "shhhh" and whispered injunctions, they made facetious comments on the picture. Ted put his arm around Ruth and Horace Wells held the new girl's hand.

After the picture—April Beauty in "A Real Woman's Way"—they stopped in at the Palace for sodas, where they found a table, sloppy from previous drinks and ordered, in loud voices, varicolored concoctions. The girls giggled and laughed. They all felt in particularly high spirits.

They walked down Broadway then and crossed over to "the other side of town."

In front of the Foster rooming house were four or five morose foreigners who took no notice of Leah and her friends. Leah always used a side door which led into a sort of combined private living-room and bedroom. There was an elaborate carved couch there, covered with red velvet, several oak rocking-chairs and a straight chair or two, one with a torn cane seat. There was a dresser in one corner and an old-fashioned bed, with high head and foot board, in another. Against one wall there was an upright piano. The floor was covered with old matting, supplemented with a couple of bright, cheap rugs. One door led into the kitchen. On the faded walls were huge, unframed lithographs, relics of beer-drinking days, that had been presented to Mrs. Foster, and two large, elaborately framed crayon enlargements, one of Leah and Esther as round-faced solemn children and the other of their presumably deceased father.

Leah ushered them into this family living-room now. She informed them in excited little gasps—Leah was apt to talk that way—that her mother was spending the week-end with a friend at a camp on Holly Mountain and that "the roof was the limit." As Leah's mother had never interfered in any way with any of Leah's activities, but had just appeared for a placid and fat "good evening, gentlemen," before disappearing into an unknown room, Tracy didn't know just what she meant.

The others seemed to understand better. Lucius played the piano. The three couples danced. They danced quite like young people were dancing all over the country, bodies meeting,

cheeks pressed together but, as they continued, little motions of the body crept in that perhaps would not have been permitted in nicer homes.

Leah brought out a bottle of cheap whiskey and explained that it wasn't dangerous, that a brother of one of her mother's roomers had distilled it himself—regular "white mule," made of corn and then colored with burnt sugar. In the kitchen, the boys cracked ice, and, diluting the stuff to their taste, they alternated dancing with returning to the kitchen for drinks.

The party grew livelier. Tracy, following the example of the others, kissed Leah and then Ella. Leah grew jealous, so he kissed her again, several times. They laughed and made love a bit more indiscreetly, now. Lucius, tired of taking the place of a mechanical piano player, picked up his hat, said a pleasant, "So long, be good," and departed. They missed the music, vaguely, but hardly realized that Lucius had gone.

Ella Murray, the new girl, decided that she had to go home. It was getting late—she had promised her folks. . . . The others protested with "Aw, Ella, be a sport, don't break up the party." She remained firm, and, with a last powdering of her nose and patting of her hair in front of the mirror, departed with Horace Wells.

The four of them were alone now. Leah turned out all of the lights save one under a pink paper shade. With many giggles and slaps, they spooned half an hour more. Tracy began protesting, then, that it was "awful late—have to go home." The girls pouted and giggled and said, with a great show of originality, "It's never late until it's early."

Ted, sitting on the couch with his arms around Ruth, getting bolder, suggested that he and Tracy, "make a night of it." The girls protested a bit feebly, giggled something about, "Aw, I should say not," and "What kind of girls do you think we are?" and "Ain't he the fresh thing!"

Suddenly, Leah leaned over, relaxed her body against his and, without in-

itation, pressed her lips against Tracy's in a long kiss. At once, for some reason, the whole thing—Leah, the party, the house—became definitely distasteful to Tracy. Perhaps the effects of the alcohol had begun to wear away. He looked around. He was sitting on a huge plush "patent" rocker with Leah in his arms. Alcohol and the cheap, unventilated smell of the Foster living-room. . . . He looked at Leah. What had he been about to do . . . he, Tracy Allen, with a mother who had tried so hard to teach him things . . . who had talked so much and so frequently against sin—against just this sort of sin? Why . . . what . . . what had he been about to do?

He got to his feet a bit unsteadily. "Sorry . . . sorry to break up the party," he said, "but, fact is . . . my mother . . . promised her I'd be home . . . didn't think . . . my mother . . ."

He got his hat, somehow. He saw the expressions on the girls' faces. Leah, cheaply pretty, seemed definitely bad. He must get away. Leah scowled at him, humiliated. He reached the door.

"Sorry," he repeated, "I . . . I got to get home . . . my mother. . . ."

#### IV

HE hurried, with great, uneven strides, through the dark streets. He took in great breaths of the night air. How good it was to be out of all that—that awful living-room—away from Leah and her friends. He felt like a good boy, again—the way he had felt coming home from Sunday-school years before, when he was a little kid. He'd try to explain to his mother, tomorrow, maybe, what her teaching had done to him. Wasn't it her teaching? He thought it was. Hadn't she said, over and over to him, "A mother is a boy's best friend."

Of course she was cross to him. Of course. After all, raising a big family is hard work. But what if she did nag, sometimes? He'd try hard, after this . . . explain to her . . . show her he meant well. He wouldn't slam doors or

answer impolitely. He'd . . . he'd be a good boy.

The night air seemed to cleanse him, to wash free the atmosphere of Lucas Street. He hurried along, whistling his little, tuneless whistle, as he crossed Broadway to the right side of town, down the tree-lined, peaceful streets to his own home.

He closed the gate carefully behind him. He went up the porch steps on his toes so the steps wouldn't squeak. He opened the screen door, the front door, which he knew had been left unlatched for him. He hung his hat on the hall hat-rack, started carefully up the stairs. A voice from the living-room startled him.

"Son, come here."

He turned, ran down the steps into the living-room.

"Why, Ma," he whispered, "you frightened me. What's the matter? You up, sitting in the dark? You're not sick, Ma?"

"No, I'm quite all right."

He heard with amazement the sharp anger of her voice.

"What's the matter?" he asked.

"Nothing's the matter with me. I—I was waiting up for you to come home."

"Waiting up for me, Ma? In the dark?"

His mother pulled at one of the chains of the electric lamp with the rose silk shade that Laura had made the year before. Tracy saw that his mother was extremely angry. Her eyes . . . her compressed lips . . . what was the matter?

"Do you know it's way past one o'clock?" she asked.

"Sure, Ma. It's Saturday night. I can sleep late. I was out with some of the crowd. I didn't think you'd stay up."

"The crowd . . . stay up," his mother echoed, scornfully. Then she burst out, suddenly, her repression disappearing in a torrent of rage,

"I've been sitting here—thinking of you — you needn't deny it . . . I know where you've been . . . where

you go . . . you with your talk of the crowd. . . . Coming home here after one o'clock . . . with a painted woman's kiss on your mouth . . . you . . . you've been in the arms of some woman . . . a woman who is no good . . . my son . . . you've been down on Third Street . . . Third Street . . . that's where you've been. . . ."

"Why, Ma, honest I haven't . . . honest . . . I . . ."

"Don't lie to me. Don't you think I know. You couldn't go with your mother and your sister—you preferred sin and a house of sin . . . lying in some woman's arms . . . receiving her kisses . . . and then coming home . . . to the home of your mother and your innocent sister . . . you aren't fit to associate with us . . . to sit at our table . . . my years of training, of warning you . . . and things like this happen . . . you go out. . . ."

"Why, Ma," he started again, "I was just with the fellows to see some girls . . . nothing like that happened, honestly. . . ."

"You needn't tell me . . . needn't lie nor interrupt." His mother's voice, still low enough not to disturb those upstairs, had risen to a sharp, thin tone. She went on,

"Girls . . . women . . . women of sin . . . scarlet women . . . after all of my lessons . . . it's been too great . . . the temptations of the flesh . . . you yielded to them . . . to a woman's embrace, to sin . . . to the temptations of sin . . . and you come back from . . . from a vile woman's arms to us, to your clean home. Shame on you, shame, I say, to yield to passion and temptation! You needn't say a word. I suspected. I stayed up and waited . . . and pictured you . . . and this is what I find . . . home after one . . . hours after decent people are in bed . . . with the smell of liquor on your breath . . . my boy, to fall into sin, to yield to lust and temptation. . . .!"

Tracy hardly listened, as his mother went on. Gee, why, what good had it done him to break away and come home? He hadn't even got the credit

for it. He never could explain things to his mother, as he had imagined he might on his walk home. Was she right, after all? Was there something important—about sin? Had there been a great temptation? Was there something wonderful about . . . passion? Had he rejected, for no reason at all, something so great that sermons and books are written about it? Perhaps, after all, Leah and her home were not sordid and ugly. Perhaps they did hold beauty and romance—perhaps Leah could offer him some of the things of which his mother spoke. His mother was going on now—

“ . . . yielding to passion . . . and then coming home to a good home, to your clean little brother and sister. . . .”

Why, after all, he didn't have to come home. Not much longer, anyhow. Harry had got away. Mary had married and got away. He was nineteen . . . old enough to get away . . . old enough for . . . for sins and temptations.

His mother poured forth more invective, then, worn out by her own eloquence, her emotions exhausted, she burst into tears, said, “My son, my son!” brokenly many times and went up to bed. He heard her sobbing, then heard the door of her room close behind her.

### V

WHAT if he had—stayed? Hadn't his mother sort of passed the thing off—and she had thought. . . . Of course. She thought he had done a lot more—had gone to Third Avenue. What if he had gone? What if he had stayed at Leah's? Why, she would have scolded—and forgiven him just the same. Of course. Here, she had accused him when he wasn't guilty . . . more than accused him . . . she had transformed the thing . . . the unknown that had repelled him . . . into something romantic and desirable.

Why not? Why not go back, now? After all . . . she thought he had gone . . . his mother thought that. She'd been as bitter as if he had gone . . . and in the morning she'd be over it.

Besides, he probably was missing something . . . weren't books and stories and plays written about things like that? Here, he had had a chance to experience things, to live, to be a man . . . and he'd turned it down . . . and his mother blamed him anyhow! How silly he was!

He stood up, tiptoed to the hat-rack, got his hat, tiptoed out of the house and out of the front gate. He remembered not to let the gate slam. He hurried three blocks to an all-night drug-store. He gave Leah's number. If she wasn't asleep . . . if Ted was still there . . . if they weren't mad at him. . . .

Leah answered the telephone.

“Hello,” she said, in her rather affected telephone voice.

“This is me, Tracy. I've been home, fixed it up with Ma so she thought I was in. What are you doing? May I come back?”

Leah's voice grew taunting.

“You sure your mother can spare you?” she asked.

“Aw, now, Leah, you know how I feel—I want to see you—I think a lot of you, really I do,” Tracy pleaded.

“But your mother. . . .”

“Aw, forget that. I fixed it up, I tell you. I'm at the drug-store . . . coming right over. . . .”

“All right,” giggled Leah, “a fellow named Connelly, who rooms here, just brought us some more booze . . . good stuff . . . Ruth's nearly asleep and Ted is trying to wake her up . . . make it snappy . . . gee, you ought to see Ruth. . . .”

Tracy hurried out of the drug-store, across Broadway to “the other side of town.” He no longer noticed the night air. He felt somehow older, more experienced, more independent, a man. His mother? Oh, he could fix it with Ma. Of course, a mother is probably a boy's best friend. He felt that. She probably was right about sin and temptation and all of that stuff. She couldn't help nagging, more than likely. He'd lie to her if she asked too many questions . . . and write nice letters to her and send her things . . . maybe . . . when he got away from home.

# My Spottgeist

By Charles J. Finger

## I

**A**LWAYS I have followed my own curiosities; never did I concern myself particularly with the views of others. Without seeking very earnestly, I fell into jobs in which I had little to do. A trick of seeing ahead, a passion for getting results, served me in good stead and I gravitated naturally into executive positions. A week ago, less than that to be accurate, I was very flourishing, but today I am not. I have been jerked violently out of my usual path.

In a way I am not greatly surprised at the change. More or less I was a fish out of water in that Southern town, for, say what you will, there is a Southern mind. I did not coincide with the local views, political, religious, moral or social. I did not care for the Chamber of Commerce crowd, the Rotarians failed to interest me, the Kiwanis group seemed childish, and I sat in the F. & A. M. Lodge not as a participant as much as an amused spectator. Again, it is natural to me to note ugly things, to catch on to evidences of lost motion, and that habit I carried into the civic field and so got in bad with the local people, for, mind you, the South is effeminate minded and full of anger and resentment at honest social diagnosis. I opposed the Ku Klux, the Prohibition amendment, and the formation of a Moral Uplifters League on the ground that such organizations tended to tyrannize and to overstep into brutalities.

Following Bryan's anti-evolution crusade, one of the preachers of the town stirred up a dust with his sermon:

"Was Your Grandfather a Gorilla?"

There were one-sided discussions and misrepresentations and I could not keep out, so I joined issue with the preacher. When he weaved around and about, showing by specious argument that the war was a good thing, an instrument in the hands of the All-Wise, I became mischievous and proposed a vote of thanks to the Kaiser in the local paper. At that the Yahoos were frantic. But you must understand that much was overlooked in the manager of the H. & J. Co., and that an immense air of deference bathed me as the man who signed the pay-roll of the only real industry in the town.

The last straw but one came when the Y. M. C. A. secretary asked me to address "our boys." Certainly from the point of eloquent lucidity my discourse was a flat failure, but otherwise it was not half bad, for, after all, I was almost persuaded of the point of view I maintained, holding that there seemed to be, sometimes, evidences of an extra mundane intelligence which interested itself in the affairs of men. But I also denied that it was an All-Wise spirit and advanced the view that arguments in plenty could be adduced to show that the super-intelligence was a tricky one, rather like a *spottgeist* that played with men for its own amusement. I argued along the line of *Caliban* in Browning's poem. I went on to say that so far as prayer was concerned, if man's wish was granted, this *polltergeist* did the job in so outrageous a manner that the gift was a curse. In the light of my own subsequent affairs that was prophetic.

## II

So to my story.

A man can talk only of what he himself knows. There's nothing truer. I thought of that this evening after I had received my wages for the day's work and began tracing farther and farther back the links in the chain which brought me to my new life. My inclination to run the whole thing down increased rather than diminished as I went along. Of course there may be more of it later on, for nothing really ends.

My affair is mixed up, in a kind of way, with Stephen Grahame and Vachel Lindsay, who came walking into our town and set the *intelligentsia* wild.

As soon as it became known that they were somebodies, although no one except the fellow with a bolshevistic reputation had previously heard of them, there were invitations to dine, to sleep and to talk. Being one of the leading citizens, which is to say being one of the men who drew a decent salary, I attended the reception and found it a dull affair. Grahame seemed to think that no one had ever walked before and was evidently a tremendous fellow in his own estimation, and Lindsay, there was no shadow of a doubt, shone in the reflected glory of Grahame's majesty. It was easy to see that they were playing up to one another. Vachel, the hero of a hundred tea fights, is a past master in the art of being social and knows how to smile sweetly on admiring dames while standing in a corner balancing a tea cup in one hand and a piece of cake in the other. As for autograph writing, he glories in it.

Seeing the pair of them, nothing would do but that my wife must have them as center pieces for a party, so, for half a day I was busy in the kitchen, preparing sandwiches, fixing up odds and ends, shoving shabby books out of sight behind more brilliant volumes and chasing up copies of Vachel's books for mantel decoration, instead of being down at the works. More or less secretly every married man in our town

has to make himself useful when social entertainments are to the fore. I have seen the banker with an apron on slicing ham for the Baptist minister's reception and once I chanced to drop in by accident when Kilgore, who is Master of the Masonic Lodge, was washing dishes and sorting out the borrowed spoons just after a buffet luncheon given in honor of some Chautauqua violinist.

Well, Lindsay played "Little Tommy Tucker," as it were, and sang for his supper, metaphorically speaking, by reciting "Daniel in the Lion's Den," and the intellectual lights of the town flocked about him and talked as if he had been Shelley *redivivus*. Then he held forth on his theory of poetry. All the time there was running in the back of my mind the thought that a fellow might have a gorgeous and purple time if he dared to break through the web of circumstances all about him. These two, I thought, were walking with ulterior motives. They had an eye on the box-office, a background of book making. I had the notion that I should like to do differently, to drop all this social and business game and to be free as was Davies the super-tramp. The mood was on me to start life afresh, to wipe the slate clean, to be where no one knew me. Mind you, I must admit that I had been somewhat bitten by Borrow, having read his "Lavengro" recently. The book had something to do with it, but it was really the Grahame-Lindsay pair who set me thinking of a way out of everything that entangled me. They fired the train.

As it fell out, next day my wife was in one of her moods. I suppose that all wives get that way, but it is none the less unpleasant. Lord help the poor fools led astray by the happy-ending novelists who believe that the gates of Paradise are entered when the church organist plays Mendelssohn! At breakfast my wife sat silent, cocking an eye into the northeast corner of the room so as to avoid seeing me. I made a remark or two, trying to be sociable,

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then thought: "To hell with it," and gave up.

I dodged the noon meal by design, but at evening there was the same gloomy sulkiness. It was a defense she cultivated. Time was when there was an escape from that kind of thing, when a drink or two might be had among decent fellows. For instance, we used to have what we called a Chess Club before the amendment passed, and when the Methodist minister tried to become a member with the expressed desire of having what he called a "woman's night," we kept him out. Good natured, gusty Kirker made great fun one evening over the sentimental twaddle that the reverend gentleman indulged in on Sunday about neglected wives, and we had a bowl of whiskey punch that Pickwick or Micawber would have delighted in. Meeker, who is a good elocutionist, read passages out of "Hands Across" and Loomis sang a song with a bawdy chorus which he had learned when he was sailing. You know the kind of jolly nights that fellows have at times. It does no harm.

However, to get back to the tale, although that's part of it in a way, because if things had not been so confoundedly, desperately dull, if life had not been so gray and monotonous the devil would not have been so successful in finding idle hands. Anyway, after an evening on the porch with my wife, sitting in utter vacuity, the office looked like a mighty cheerful place to me. The work-hours were interesting and the so-called rest-hours deadly dull. I never cared for moving picture shows, certainly avoided the prayer meetings, found nothing to attract me in ice cream parlors, and did not even attempt to look at the ineptitudes in the editorial columns of the evening papers.

The office was a relief. It was always neat and orderly and my desk clean and tidy, for, somehow, I was never the sort to bundle things on top of one another or to jam the pigeon-holes of the roll-top full of papers. Households cannot touch businesses for order and interest. Then too, there is

a spirit of *bonhomie* never found in the home. Perhaps the common interest makes for a kind of happiness. In the home are divided interests and those who sit nearest are farthest apart. There are stone walls of separation and each is busy with his own thoughts, each plotting to get away from the other.

### III

SILVIA came in. She had some question to ask or suggestion to make about the mailing department. It was trivial and I have forgotten it now. I was glad to see her, for I always looked at her with interest, she was so straight, and clean, and bright. When she had finished what she had to say she stood, half hesitating, a new attitude for her, for she had always struck me as the soul of directness. Asking her if there was anything else she wished attended to, I noticed that she looked at me quickly, blushed, cast down her eyes and toyed with a paper knife. Bear in mind that there existed a strong, if unvoiced sympathy between us. She had been with the firm for six years and I remembered her as a dainty little thing with hanging hair, dressed in a sailor suit the first day she had gone to work.

"I am going to be married," she said, and laughed a little very low.

At that I tried to say something but could find no words. It astonished me to find that I was dazed like a man suddenly confronted with a new problem. I looked at her fresh face, all life and health, and I remember noticing with a kind of approval her pearl gray skirt and trim legs. My mind was leaping back and forth remembering things, little incidents; her willing aid and helpfulness; her cheerfulness; her capability.

"Look here, Sylvia," said I, surprised at my own agitation, "I'm mighty sorry to hear that. . . . By George I am. . . . Who is the fellow? I had no idea."

She told me. He was a decent enough man in the pressroom, a new man whose work was perfectly satisfactory,

but for all that I felt keen resentment. An instant and fierce dislike for him took possession of me. I knew that I was making a fool of myself, that I was acting in a queer way, but for the life of me I could not help it and knew that she understood my mood.

"See here, Sylvia. It's not worth it." I went on. I was tense and eager as though I was bent on putting across a deal. "Let me tell you. Married life's hell. You get tired of one another as soon as the first burst is over. . . . I wish you'd understand. . . . Why not wait a while?"

I might have said much more, wanted to, in fact, but somehow there came a pause. I was surprised to find how difficult it was to go on. She looked at me without a word but there was the light of kindness in her eye and it was a kindness that somehow had a pity in it. Then she left the office and I found myself trembling violently. I turned to my mail, I tried to dismiss the incident, but found it impossible to concentrate. An extraordinary bitterness took possession of me.

For the next hour I wandered about the place, through machine-room, basement, office and yard, and I was in a villainous temper. Memories were stirring in certain deep chambers of my heart, and I kept saying to myself, "Let the thing drop. You are making an ass of yourself and anyway you are in the cold as far as affection is concerned," yet I could not banish the vision of Sylvia as I had seen her a thousand times. For one thing, she had been one of those creatures who soothed. When I had been savage, disagreeable, worried, she had known somehow and had smoothed matters. So my mind and memory were busy. I had brief visions of Sylvia in a garment of white standing in the filing-room superintending things in a quiet way. I recalled vividly one Sunday when I met her on the street and admired her pleated skirt and the general effect of a pleasant brown, with certain touches of scarlet by the way of overtone, and a red, red rose at her breast. We talked quite a

while then; talked indeed until she said, with a little smile, "People will wonder," for in such a town as ours it is dangerous for a man who is married to talk pleasantly to a girl. As I recalled that day and the talk under the chestnut tree, I had a vivid picture of the golden arabesque made by the shafts of sunlight that pierced the leafy roof.

From a corner of the machine-room I watched the man who was to be her husband. He was in overalls well greased and blackened, and he went about his work whistling softly. I could find no fault in him, yet I was full of irrational resentment. Mentally I made comparisons. Both of us were able-bodied men in the fulness of vigor, both perfectly fit. The only difference was that I had sold my birthright. The thought infuriated me. I seemed somehow to have been unfairly trapped. I seemed to have paid for with my life what I might have had for a few dollars.

#### IV

At the door of the mailing-room I hesitated. Something within me seemed to be striving to arrive at a conclusion, something of which I was not a real part but only a mildly interested spectator. I saw myself as the prosaic executive, the man with the strangle hold. That was clear. But I also saw another being, a hungry creature looking upon everything gained, everything accomplished as of no avail, looking upon position and place as mere dross compared with the hunger of the heart. It seemed that Sylvia and life illimitable far outweighed everything else. As I say, I hesitated at the door of the accounting department, finding it extraordinarily difficult to enter.

Inside, Miss Primrose of the audit department met me. She is severe, sedate, angular and at once threw her grappling hooks and bearded me, as it were, becoming voluble on the merits of the voucher system, emphasizing her points with little raps in the air with a lead pencil. I seemed to listen attentively but my mind was active with foreign

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ideas. Now and then I made an honest effort, wrenched myself round, as it were, trying to take in what she was saying, but my eye was busy with other things that I had seen a thousand times but now saw for the first time.

The air of soft femininity soothed me. I was happy in the sight of many girls at desks and typewriters, the restless heads poised on slim necks, the crowning glories of massed hair, the color all about. These lifted me—gave me vigor and interest. At that moment not all the machines in the world, not all the organizations or the amazing details of the business world could have satiated me. So I moved up the aisle, Miss Primrose following and chattering, noting here the curve of a shoulder and neck, there the faint penumbra of breast and especially one little creature of delight, a mere girl, who was a kind of office messenger all compact of merriment and brightness. She climbed with the agility of a monkey up a set of open shelves as we passed, and, reaching high for a filing case, revealed a swift vision of blue pantalettes and rather knobby knee. That Miss Primrose saw, and seeing, her lips tightened and her chin shot out swiftly.

"Come down," she said sharply, "and in future, get the boy to do that kind of thing. Or get a ladder."

Then she turned to me.

"There should be," she said accusingly, "a kind of uniform for office use. A kind of gray with sensible skirts. *Not short.*"

Then she reverted to her voucher system again. I had some ado to shake her off.

In the mailing-room Sylvia betrayed no surprise. She smiled at me as she had always done.

Finding it warm in there, the air laden with the smell of paper and throbbing with the dim reverberation of the machinery in the basement, I suggested the opening of a window and Sylvia moved to comply. No sooner had she touched the window frame than I started to aid her. It was deliberate. I wanted to be near her. My eye took

in the little light in her brown hair as the sun touched it. Lifting the window sash it was not by accident that I brushed her bare arm with mine and the light touch of flesh was good to me. Her eyes met mine, then swiftly dropped, and I wondered if she guessed that the contact was intended.

"Makes a whole lot of difference," I said rather loudly, play-acting of course, then passed on down the room, all about me and in advance of my progress of course being an air of intense activity. At the outer door I picked up a letter from the file basket, then said, so that everyone could hear, "By the way, Miss Campbell, I wish that you would step into the office when it is convenient. I want to see you about this. I'll take it."

Excited as I was, I knew that it was necessary to produce an impression of biting interest in business. A married man must be austere in the public eye. He must renounce much. Not for him is the happiness of a careless life.

In the office I should have been doing a dozen things. I should have read the monthly report, should have met the lumber man, should have admitted the drummers on the bench outside who wanted to sell things. Instead, my morning's work was neglected and I sat at my desk rehearsing little sentences that might be effective in the coming interview. I made up my mind to be a man of magnanimity. I would be sympathetic and brotherly and all that kind of thing. I would be very clear and full and there must be no phlandering, for there were many Miss Primroses in town. Besides, the whole business was too complicated. A man could not run against convention. He must eat his own vitals if necessary. That was clear. So I would be proper as a wax figure, aloof as Stylites.

Hearing Sylvia's step, I stood up. Then, suddenly, we were in one another's arms. I tell it as it happened. Close, close we clung and for the first time in my life I knew the passion in a kiss. I heard her give a half sigh, a

half stifled cry of contentment and, suddenly, most wonderfully, all things were clear and the world perfect. Thrillingly soft she was and very still in my arms and, as I looked into her eyes, I saw a strange light in them.

Then we were whispering together and very happy, as we stood in the shelter of the half open door of the big safe. Prudence had dictated it wiser that the office door be left unlocked.

"We must go somewhere, dear," I said, and she made no reply but toyed with the button of my vest.

"So many years we have been together, we can't part now," I went on eagerly. "I have always loved you."

At the heart of me was the fear that I might lose her after all and I wanted some impossible passionate declaration from her. But above all I wanted somehow, anyhow, to be alone with her and the world well lost.

"Why have you waited so long?" was all that she said in that meeting and for reply I held her the tighter and kissed her again and again and pressed my lips on her soft flesh of neck and shoulders.

Someone became audible outside and I shouted an invitation to come in, and, at the same moment, thrust a bundle of papers into Sylvia's hands.

"So please have them tabulated," said I as the messenger girl in the blue pantalettes came in with a note from Miss Primrose.

## V

THE day spent with Sylvia stands out bright and golden. We left town by different trains, I buying a ticket for a station in an opposite direction, doubling on my trail for safety's sake. In small towns where the station agent wants to know your business, why you travel and when you return, it is well to observe caution.

We met at noon in Portsdown Park and wandered away and over the hills. Along a winding path, a tree-shaded walk, we climbed to the hilltop and the air was like good wine. We had a lunch

and little was said but there was supreme content and Sylvia, I think, was as happy as I was. Once she danced with delight when she saw the valley below and the wavering shadows that lay across it and realized that except for the distant barking of some sheep-dog, we were away from the noise and the strife. The world of men seemed very far away and very unreal to me, as, looking at Sylvia standing on a little elevation and noting her wind-blown skirt and the wisp of hair that brushed her cheek, I loved her the more. Her splendid beauty, her keen appreciation of the things about her, her quick wit and intelligence moved me strangely. The idea was monstrous to entertain that she must become a household drudge, must be cooped in three rooms, a washer of greasy overalls and, soon, the rejected toy of Norwood's passion. The thought of that made me furious and a shyness seemed to come between us, so that we sat silent for quite a while, our hands lightly touching.

Then again the flood gates were unloosed and we were wonderfully intimate, talking of ten thousand things. At one time, as we were slowly walking, I suddenly stopped and, on an impulse, lifted her in my arms as I would have lifted a child and held her there cradled, showering kisses on her. I felt that I must take her and run away into quiet places—away where there were trees, and flowers, and laughing streams, and violet hills. At another time, as we were walking slowly among oak trees, I held out both hands toward her and she came to me with a little run, meeting my eyes with straight, steady gaze.

"Am I a scoundrel, Sylvia?" I asked.

"No—no," she cried breathlessly.

"Don't you see that I *understand*. . . . Nothing matters. We must be together always. I could not stand the parting."

At that I became sober and full of eagerness to plan.

"Let us look at it calmly—" I began, but she put a hand to my lips.

"No. We won't plan. Just let things happen. It's just chance." She became sober: the Sylvia of the office. "You

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know I have always thought of you. I have always wanted to be with you. And I still want to be with you. To be your helper, your right hand. I don't know how Norwood came into it, for I don't want him at all. Listen. You are mine, mine, mine, and I am yours, all yours. Dear heart, don't you understand?"

From that moment things were different. We were full of gaiety. It was the rejuvenescence of a golden age. If we were to be truant lovers, then truant lovers we would be. As for the future, there seemed to be none. All was today.

The only cloud appeared when we were at the table in the hotel. Sullivan, the dentist of our town, by some ill luck was there and saw us, and, bolder than he is, took a seat at our table, nor was there any shaking him off. I had to conjure up some plausible lie to protect Sylvia and give our presence there the appearance of a chance encounter. Still I was not at ease. Men gossips are every whit as evil as women gossips, their tongues quite as poisonous. It was an extremely lucky chance that I had not registered at the desk. And of course we had to make the best of it and Sylvia left for home on the evening train.

## VI

ON the Tuesday following I had been at the Lodge until near midnight and was bored to the point of yawning, for there had been three candidates, a long speech by the State inspector, and ham sandwiches. Being unnoticed, I slipped out quietly. In a town such as ours, it is not well to gain the reputation of being neglectful of both church and lodge.

Now I was planning in a nebulous kind of way means of escape from everything, some grand Grahame-Lindsay tour with Sylvia, so I was in haste to get to bed and be away from the living world a while. Therefore I cut across lots and down back alleys. Just as I crossed Sunner Street an ample kind of fellow dressed in a queer white robe em-

blazoned with a red cross called on me to halt. I had instant fear of great danger, but for all that noticed that he kicked his horse vigorously, for the beast was slow. Then, in a flash, I saw a white patch on the shoulder of the horse and so knew it for the grocer's animal. At the same time, the man's fantastic draperies lifting, I caught sight of the turned up bottoms of overalls. In spite of my alarm, that struck me as being funny.

But other noises burst on me. I heard shoutings and saw two coming at a trot from the next corner. Then I suspected that they were after me and I saw a mass of unexpected ramifications. I pieced things together. I remembered then what I had only half noticed, that since my return from the city there had been sidelong glances and a perceptible coldness on the part of men I had met. So, seeing the two coming, I turned in my tracks and cut down an alley behind the courthouse, crossed the Henley garden plot, vaulted the low fence and came out on Front Street only to uncover an ambush at the corner of two draped men on foot.

I heard one say, "Here he comes." The other replied urgently and staccato: "Wait. Wait. I've dropped my glasses," and I recognized the voice of the Third Street preacher. The first speaker muttered something ill-temperedly and dropped out of sight as I appeared.

My action was neither honorable nor chivalric, for I bore down on the remaining man and struck out blindly, fiercely, but he dodged. With the excitement of it all my heart thumped but I was glad, I remember, to hear the heavenly messenger make a vigorous appeal for clemency and to see that he was sadly encumbered with his robes. For a moment he stood, apparently contemplating explanation, for one hand was held out through a slit in the robe, but, after a moment's hesitation, he turned sharply and hurried away, his draperies gathered together absurdly.

At the corner next opposite I caught sight of my own house and a little crowd

of white-clad figures before it. They were evidently waiting for me. For a moment, hiding in the shadow of a chestnut tree, the same under which I had talked to Sylvia that Sunday, I scrutinized the situation. For a second I weighed the idea of facing the mob and saw dramatic possibilities in open defiance but on the heels of that came the thought that the crowd was full of the lust of cruelty and meanness. I could visualize behind the mask, the pig-like eyes of Sullivan, the dentist, the lascivious little beast who had bruted the report about me. My momentary irresolution was dispelled when, with a fluttering rush, a brace of fellows from the rear bore down upon me. There was no noise of footsteps but I heard the phantom of a smothered kind of yell from one of them as I fled. At me they came with arms held out and I knew that they were encumbered with their robes.

Fortunately there was a clear road down the alley to the factory and I went swiftly, spurred with grim intentness. One of the two sped like the wind in pursuit, the other was less promptly active. With an agility that surprised me, I sprang at the coal yard fence and was almost safe when the fellow behind caught at my foot. I kicked at him vigorously but he held on and my hands, being bruised with the board ends, I soon let go so that we fell in a heap. For a moment we struggled fearfully and I had him by the throat. His mask slipped aside and I saw the mild and inoffensive face of the town shoemaker, his pallor exaggerated by the moonlight. I released him, wondering how he of all men became committed to that kind of nonsense and he moved his head about with an immense solicitude, then put his hands to his throat. My fury of fear and resentment vanished, and for a moment we stood regarding one another, my mind casting about for some means of escape. The shoemaker busied himself adjusting his soiled and torn robes, meanwhile half sobbing.

Suddenly the town seemed to awake.

I heard a church-bell begin to toll, then a second and a third and there were sounds of shoutings. Then the clamorous fire-bell.

"Give me a leg over," I said. "And hurry."

The job of scaling the fence was more difficult than I had supposed, and, getting over, I tore my trousers sadly, but once in the factory yard I felt safe. There was a ridiculous assurance whispered through the fence that I was safe so far as he was concerned, then a revolver shot sounded from somewhere and almost at the same moment the whistle of the freight train as it pulled into the station made an alarming noise. But that last gave me an idea and I left the yard by way of the coal chute.

## VII

At the water tank, keeping in the shade of the train, I managed to find an empty stock car. It was the first time that I had tried that kind of thing and it was ridiculously easy. The door stood partly open and I crept in and felt safe crouched in the corner. For all that I was ill at ease until the train started, but as we left the town my fears fled. Once during the night, at a siding stop, I heard a couple of trainmen talking.

Said one: "Someone in there, ain't there?" He took a step or two and I watched the shadows on the car roof cast by his swinging lantern.

"Yep," the other answered. "Some poor bloody bum of a hobo. Let him be."

That was all, and to me it was like a passport. But hours later I sat up with a gripping at my heart. "Bum of a hobo." It came to me with force and a part of me played with the words. It rang as a refrain throughout the night and fitted itself to the clicking of the wheels as they hit the rail joints. Presently it was as if the whole world heard it.

Then a new thought came. A few hours ago I had been somebody. I had had the strangle-hold, with the power

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to hire and to fire. In the factory I had been the check to violent oscillations. A word dropped between two warring foremen had settled all, had had a kind of sacramental influence. But now,

Bum of a ho—bo: bum of a ho—bo:  
None so poor to do him reverence.

The new line shot in and fitted itself to the refrain and the words accented themselves, synchronizing with the noises all about.

In the early morning, the train slowing up on entering a town, one of the train crew curtly bade me "get to hell out of it" and I dropped from the car in haste, forgetting both coat and hat, which I had taken off and hung on a splinter, the night being warm. I remembered when too late and insanely ran after the train a little way. Then it was that I recognized my plight, for money I had none. Ruthlessly some *rubezahl* seemed to be cutting one by one the bonds that connected me with my past. I seemed to be running up a narrow angle, headed inexorably in one direction. I had the sensation that I was growing smaller, meaner, more and more craven.

Catching sight of myself in a store mirror I was shocked into something that was almost disgust. A flap of cloth hung at my thigh and the undergarment showed white beneath. I had lost my sleeve links and had rolled up the sleeves but my shirt was of soft material and the sleeves were continually dropping down. What affected me unpleasantly was the prominence of my shoes, coated with a heavy yellow clay acquired at the water tank. That and my unshaven chin.

Naturally I went breakfastless. At a little eating house I made overtures to the proprietor and he threw a doughnut on the counter in surly and grudging manner. At that my pride revolted and I left. A little later on I tried to enter a bank, seeing a benevolent kind of man at a desk. It was my intention to explain my plight and throw myself on his humanity but a young man met

me at the door and superciliously asked me my business, whereupon I mumbled something about being in the wrong place and turned away. A third trial I made on the spur of a sudden impulse, seeing a grocer standing at his doorway in profound meditation as he picked his teeth. At his right hand was a glorious array of the fruits of the earth and it seemed the easiest thing in the world for him to invite me to eat out of the plenitude of his stock. But at my first words he turned a cold and unfriendly eye upon me and, in a kind of growl, said, "What j'er want?" whereupon I asked him for work for an hour or two.

He regarded me long and dubiously: threateningly in fact.

"We put your kind on the rock pile in this 'ere burg," he said and turned away.

Let me tell you, it does not take long for a man to find where he is. I fell back on my philosophy, or a phase of it, and went on muttering Henley's "Master of My Fate," but it was all empty and meaningless, and I knew it. Frankly, a great despair fell upon me. I was, it is true, where I had wanted to be—free, down to bedrock and ready to start afresh, but I did not like the way in which the *spottgeist* had done the job. It was too coarse, too actual.

Your Lindsays and Carltons and Wyckoffs only play at the game. They can step out of it all when they wish, drop the mask when discomfort begins. They are like the queen playing milkmaid at Trianon. As for me, I was uncomfortable, for my last wisp of sense of power had left me. I knew I had lost security, had forgotten the magic word. So inside I was all wrong, spiritless, craven-souled, beaten; nor could I dissemble the stir in my mind, try as I would. The consciousness that my old self was gone forever broke out at every effort I made to pull myself together.

Outside the town, for I was resolute at least to get to the quiet, I came to a little creek and sat there a while. For

long I lay half dreaming in spite of my hunger. Then a man in patched and faded overalls came slouching along and we fell into talk. In a sociable way he shared his lunch with me, for, as it came out, he was the town garbage man and came to that creek in fine weather for his noon hour. From him I learned of the berry-picking industry, and an hour later was in a strawberry patch

with a dozen others, all dizzy with the unaccustomed stooping.

## VIII

THE farmer paid me off at 6 p. m. and I had earned \$1.25. It was an immense relief to me to sit down and trace out the links of the chain as I have set them down.



## Tragedy

By Marie Gallagher

**T**RIUMPHANTLY the bronze serpent  
Twined its lucent body  
Around the tense muscles  
Of the petrified gladiators.

Elusively the frail perfume  
Hid its elfin self  
Behind the silken skirts  
Of the dancers on the tapestries.

Mournfully a pale arm  
Curved its soft fullness  
Around a Persian cushion  
Pressing it to a warm breast . . .

But the breast was strangely still  
And the breath of life  
But faintly stirred  
The blue-winged bird  
On the velvet bodice.

Disdainfully the silver peacock  
Twirled its arrogant tail  
Around the smooth surface  
Of the tiny hand-mirror.

Tragic brown eyes  
Gazed into their own depths  
And pale lips  
Mocked pale lips. . . .

Outside  
The hurdy-gurdy played. . . .



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# The Great Adventure of Aleck Johnson

By Marian Spitzer

## I

THE subway train pulled into King's Highway. Aleck Johnson, who had been standing at attention for the last few seconds before the station was reached, walked alertly to the center door and selected a large key from the assortment suspended on a chain from one of his coat buttons. He inserted the key into a keyhole, pressed several large buttons, and the three sliding doors of the car lurched slowly open. Aleck Johnson smiled faintly to himself as he called his unvarying formula:

"King's Highway! Last stop! Change here for Coney Island!"

He watched the passengers alight, gave polite directions to a pair of untidy women and then with a sigh of pleasure turned to the car window and abandoned himself to an inspection of the black scroll on which in white letters were printed various legends announcing the destination of the train. He turned the crank slowly, reading each bit of stenciling with care.

"Via Tunnel," said one, and another, "Via Bridge." He turned on and on, pausing a moment over each sign as it presented a new vista to his inner eye. "Queensboro Bridge," "59th Street," "Times Square." He turned the scroll its full length and came back finally to the sign which said "Via Bridge." That was really the most delightful one of all. It gave you the longest ride above ground and it was pleasant going over the bridge and seeing the ships and people the way you could.

"This a bridge train?" asked a fat

man as he lumbered aboard. Aleck Johnson pointed a thumb to the sign and smiled.

"Yeah," he said. A sudden thought occurred to him. What a lot of power he had when you came right down to it. Why, he could turn on a "Via Bridge" sign when he knew the train was going under the tunnel, and fool hundreds of people, spoil their whole day, maybe. And even get them into serious trouble by making them late to work, or miss a train somewhere. Oh, there were lots of things he could do to people. Really, they were in his power. He grinned a little foolishly to himself.

Not that he would ever use that power. He was too kind-hearted for that. But it was fun thinking about it. You got to thinking all sorts of things when you rode back and forth in the subway all day long. He had seen pictures in the paper by this fellow Briggs once in a while when people left the *Tribune* in the car. "Wonder What a Truck Horse Thinks About?" and stuff like that. He thought it would be good to put one in on what a B. R. T. subway guard thinks about.

He thought about endless things. He made up stories about the people who came into the train, and he always felt sure he knew whether they were happy or sad, or when they had been quarreling. He liked the girls who rode on his car and he always smiled upon them. They never smiled back and they never thought he was fresh. They just didn't notice him. He loved the way they looked, with their short skirts and their red mouths and the fluffy bobbed hair.

Out in the country, where he had come from, people were always saying mean things about city girls and the way they went on. But Aleck Johnson liked them better than the farm girls, who wore funny clothes and were all the time trying to get you to marry them.

Aleck didn't like the country anyway, and he hated working on farms. It was a strange way to feel, he admitted to himself, but he always seemed to be stifling on the farm. He couldn't breathe. And he never saw anyone except the same old folks he had seen all his life. He wanted to see people, lots of them. He didn't care much whether he ever got to know them, but he wanted to see them all around him. And he felt sure that some day he would have a great adventure. He had read a wonderful book one time which a summer boarder had left in the village post office. All about a beautiful actress who was pursued by a villain who was foiled in the last chapter. And in the end she married the hero, who wrote plays for her. Tessie her name was, and she had yellow hair and blue eyes. She was Aleck's ideal. He thought perhaps if he went to the city he might meet a girl like that. All the girls near his father's farm had wispy hair, and it was always brown.

So he had gone to New York, which was only about a six hour ride from his home in Pennsylvania. First he had worked as a conductor on a street car. He liked that because he saw so many people. He loved the city but he made no friends there. He didn't want to. Something inside made him keep away from other people. He just wanted to watch them and see what they were doing. And then if his adventure came along he wouldn't have anything else to push out of the way first. He would be ready for it.

Aleck had been in New York about six months when he switched from the Sixth Avenue street car to the B. R. T. He felt he should have a change, and see different people from the ones who rode on Sixth Avenue. So he applied for a job as a guard on the trains that

ran to Brooklyn. He had been working there a year and a half now, and it was still fascinating. He worked about nine hours a day and enjoyed every hour. This week he was doing a day shift and decided to go out and have a good time every night. There were lots of things he could do—movies, Coney, the elegant arcade and shooting gallery in Fourteenth Street, which to Aleck's astonishment was never crowded. He didn't understand why people didn't go to it more, it furnished such a variety of entertainment. He would save that until the end of the week because it was the best.

First he would go to the vaudeville and movie theatre a few blocks from where he lived. There was a swell picture there this week, and five good acts. The headliner was the Marvelous Marcony, assisted by Mlle. Adorée, in his world famous mystery marvel, "Cutting a Woman in Two."

## II

ALECK ate his dinner and got to the theatre toward the end of the news reel. He waited impatiently for the show to begin, and sat appreciatively through the first four acts, which were in turn a juggler, a stout single woman, a comedy sketch, and an eccentric dancing team. But his real interest was centered in the Marvelous Marcony. Cutting a woman in two! What a thrilling and difficult job that was. He could tell it was dangerous, because out in front of the theater, the subject of such neighborhood speculation, stood a shiny new motor ambulance, beautifully equipped, and surmounted by a crisp looking young doctor and a pretty girl in a nurse's uniform. They told anybody who asked that they were there in case anything went wrong when the woman was being cut in two.

Aleck felt a preliminary tingle when the curtain rose for the last act. The house was still except for the sound of excited breathing here and there. The stage was almost bare. In the center stood a box, about the size of a coffin, painted gold and ornately trimmed. A



fattish man, with long greasy hair and an unctuous smile, greeted the audience, introducing himself as the Marvelous Marcony. This wonderful feat of magic, he assured his listeners, had never been performed before on any stage. This miraculous experiment was his own scientific discovery and anybody else claiming credit for it was a charlatan and a thief. He would place Mlle. Adorée, his beautiful young assistant, in the box, before their very eyes, and within two minutes he would cut through the box with his saw. Two minutes after that he would place the severed pieces of the box together again and out would step Mlle. Adorée safe and sound, entirely unharmed by her operation. Mlle. Adorée, would she be good enough to show herself to the ladies and gentlemen?

Mlle. Adorée tripped lightly out upon the stage, greeted by a scattering of applause. As she stepped up to the footlights, smiled and waved her hand, Aleck Johnson experienced his second distinct thrill of the evening. Mlle. Adorée had yellow, curly hair. A bright, beautiful shade of yellow. It was short and the ends turned up into scores of tiny, careful corkscrews, which quivered and bobbed about her face.

Aleck leaned forward in his seat. He wondered whether she had blue eyes. She must have, with hair like that. How he wished he had come early and found a seat farther front. She looked like Tessie, the beautiful actress in the book out home. She must be the one! His adventure to see her go into that box and get cut in half. It would be horrible, though, if anything should happen to her. Of course there was a trick in it somewhere. Aleck knew that. You couldn't fool him so easily. But still, you never could tell. Even in a trick there might be a slip-up. If they weren't nervous why did they have that ambulance outside?

The Marvelous Marcony was striding rapidly about the stage, examining the coffin-like box, looking into the wings and talking to the audience.

"To prove that I am not resorting to a trick of any kind," he said expansively, "I will ask several gentlemen from the audience to step up on the stage and act as a committee of inspection. Come now, gentlemen, and see for yourselves. Half a dozen of you, if you please." And he gesticulated with a welcoming hand.

Aleck Johnson strained forward in his chair. His heart gave a leap that almost wrenched it out of his breast. How he would like to go up there! But of course it was a fake. The guy had his own fellows planted in the audience. Well, he could go up anyway. They couldn't stop him. Then he could get a good look at that girl. And he'd always wanted to see what a stage looked like close up.

Slowly and with a show of reluctance several men from various sections of the lower floor made their way up to the stage, encouraged by honeyed words from the Marvelous Marcony. Aleck Johnson, crimson of face and violent of pulse, half rose from his seat, looked around, sighed prodigiously and sat down again. He was well in the center of the row and to reach the aisle would have to climb out over a good many people. His courage oozed. He couldn't make the grade.

The men upon reaching the stage walked gingerly about, peering into the wings and touching the box, now standing open on the floor. Back in his seat Aleck wished passionately that he had gone up. It looked fascinating. Well, it was too late now. He wished they'd hurry up and get the thing over. He was nervous, afraid that something would happen to the girl. She was a little thing, he noticed, delicate looking. It wouldn't take much cutting to kill her. What a way to earn a living!

The committee having expressed its collective satisfaction as to the absence of trap doors, hidden boxes and other means of escape, Mlle. Adorée, pirouetting for a moment, stepped smilingly into the box, unaware, apparently of her impending danger. Her little feet protruded from holes in one end, her yellow head and fluttering hands from the

other. The Marvelous Marcony, his smile deepening, made an incision with a penknife in her stocking, drawing the cut part away from her feet. She wiggled her tiny toes and the committee was asked to satisfy itself as to the human quality of the foot. Some shuffling about the base of the box, some self-conscious looking from one to another, a little giggling while they touched the obviously flesh-and-blood toes, and the operation was begun.

"Stand aside, gentlemen, if you please," besought the Marvelous Marcony. "I want to avoid any possible accident. My saw is shar-r-r-p!"

The audience shivered. Marcony and an assistant walked slowly toward the right wing, picked up a huge handsaw, dropped it on the floor with a resounding clangor to prove its genuineness, gave it to the grinning youths on the platform to test for themselves, rolled up their sleeves and placed the saw in the exact center of the box cover.

"R-r-ready!" intoned the Marvelous Marcony. "Begin!"

The saw sank its teeth voraciously into the yielding wood. Slowly back and forth it jarred, with a horrid grating noise, each time a little nearer to the exact spot where the girl lay. The audience was spellbound, silent once more save for the breathing of the hot, excited people. A subtle change in the sound as the saw bit deeper and deeper into the box spread its ghastly message. It had reached the girl now. You could hear the difference. Human bones! The Marvelous Marcony smiled ghoulishly. The saw stuck and he gave it an extra jerk. "She's tough," he said with a wink. A woman shrieked. A baby emitted a succession of howls and was carried from the theater.

Aleck Johnson clutched the arms of his chair. His mouth was open, his eyes wide. A shower of sweat fell from his forehead. It was frightful. He couldn't bear it, that terrible steel thing cutting into her tender flesh. With a strangled sound that was made of a sob and a snarl, he staggered from his seat and made his way blindly to the aisle, un-

mindful of his annoyed neighbors. Somehow he got to the rear of the floor and started to leave the theater. But something held him there. He must see what happened. He must be there if anything went wrong. Wiping his face with an already damp handkerchief, he stood behind the last row and waited until the interminable ordeal was over. He scarcely saw what went on. He was too excited. Finally, after a thousand years. Mlle. Adorée, her yellow curls still bobbing briskly and her bright smile unchanged, popped up from the bottom of the box, made a little bow and ran off-stage.

### III

In the storm of applause that followed, Aleck Johnson left the theater. He was completely unnerved. His hands were trembling violently. When he got outside the ambulance was still there.

"The act over?" asked the crisp young man in the white duck suit. He smiled with relief when Aleck told him it was. "C'mon kid," he said to the girl. "We can beat it now."

Aleck wondered how he could be so heartless. They hadn't even asked whether she was all right. He paused as the thought occurred to him. They knew she would be all right. He was a fool to carry on like that. Probably wasn't dangerous at all.

After he was in bed Aleck thought again about the girl. She surely was pretty. Funny, just seemed to fit the idea he'd had of Tessie, the beautiful actress. He wondered what her name was. Adorée was probably only a stage name. Maybe it was Tessie, too. He'd like to find out. She was so little and cute. And awfully young. Maybe she was Marcony's daughter. Well, what difference did it make to him? He'd never know. He'd never even see her again.

All the next day Aleck was rather absentminded when he called his stations. His mind kept reverting to the theater, with that poor little yellow-haired girl locked up in a box, and the

saw slowly scrunching down toward her warm pink body. He couldn't rid himself of the picture, no matter how hard he tried.

In the evening he decided to visit the arcade in Fourteenth Street. He walked down Fifth Avenue and had gone as far as Eighteenth Street when he turned around and began to walk back. Somehow he didn't care much for the idea of the arcade that night. He'd get to bed early and get a good rest. He hadn't slept well the night before.

When he reached the street where the vaudeville theater was, he thought he might as well walk by and see whether there was a good crowd. He was a little curious about the ambulance, too. It was still standing in front of the theater, with the same nurse and doctor on guard.

"Well," said Aleck with an effort, "nothin' happened yet, did it?" It was always hard for him to talk to strangers. The doctor smilingly assured him that everything was all right. He asked Aleck how he liked the act. Aleck said he thought it was swell, but kind of dangerous. Well, the doctor said, none of the good things in life came easy. Aleck stood around the entrance for a little while, shifting from one foot to the other, and making shy comments to the white-suited pair.

"Yes," said the young man in response to a stammered question, "she's a swell-looking girl. No, she ain't related to Marcony. Not a-tall."

Aleck was strangely glad. He didn't like the looks of this fellow Marcony. You couldn't trust him. Gosh, he thought, suppose he ever got sore at that girl and wanted to have revenge on her! It would be a cinch for him to kill her and say it was an accident.

This thought worried him. He decided to go inside and watch the act again. Maybe he could figure out how it was worked. He would go up to the stage himself this time and no mistake.

He bought a ticket and walked with a heavy tread down the aisle to a seat near the front of the house. He wanted to get on the aisle, but the row was crowd-

ed and there was just one seat, about halfway in. The act was not on yet and he watched the two eccentric dancers with unusual impatience, thinking about Mlle. Adorée and how cute she was. He bet she'd make a good actress, too. If he could only write plays, like the hero in "All for Name and Gold," he'd see that she didn't have to do this awful business every day.

After an endless time the curtain went up on the Marvelous Marcony. Aleck Johnson waited feverishly for him to ask for his committee of inspection. He looked around at the men who rose and walked stageward. They were not the same men as last night. Then it wasn't a plant. That made him think. Maybe the whole thing was real then. He started to leave his seat and thread his way nervously over the people in the row, his heart racing wildly, his hands hot. As he neared the end of the row he found himself trembling violently, and his knees shaking. He clutched at the back of the chair to steady himself. The man behind grumbled loudly that he was obstructing the view. He started to move, but some dead weight seemed to paralyze his feet. He simply could not go down that aisle and onto the stage. With a terrific effort he lurched forward, just in time to hear the smooth voice of Marcony say that his committee was large enough.

Slowly and to the accompaniment of disagreeable sounds from the people he had inconvenienced, Aleck found his way back to his seat. He sank down, suddenly limp, and forced his attention on the stage.

By this time Marcony and his assistant had begun to saw through the box. Aleck's eyes were riveted on that saw. Every passage of it through the box was a passage through his heart and body. His fists were clenched, his eyes bulging. Veins stood out on his head. It was suffocating, intolerable. He'd have to go out. But the thought of the imprecations of those people over whom he'd have to climb deterred him. He couldn't stay and he couldn't go. He closed his eyes tightly and covered them

with his hands until the sounds around him testified that the ordeal was over.

Mlle. Adorée was standing gracefully on her toes, smiling and bowing to the acclaiming audience. She kissed her finger tips and blew the kisses down over the house. One of them Aleck noticed came right in his direction. Maybe she saw him and knew how much he liked her. Maybe it was just coincidence. Maybe it was Fate!

Again on the next day Aleck's passengers were accorded little of his usual keen observation. He did not notice which were quarreling or which were happy. He didn't smile at a single girl. He scarcely saw anything. His mind was back in the theater, with the lovely little girl who was going through that awful thing every day and night. To-day was the last day; they changed the program twice a week. He'd have to go back that night and get up on the stage, no matter how scared he was.

#### IV

He did it, too. He was at the theater early, sitting in the second row, on the aisle. He sat through the first part of the bill in a state of semi-consciousness. All he knew was the interminable time it took to reach the last act. Finally the curtain rose and the routine began again. Marcony, bending over the footlights, stroking his hands, asked for his nightly quota. He seemed to smile down at Aleck. So did Mlle. Adorée, a beckoning sort of smile, it appeared to him. Aleck's face went scarlet; again his heart set up a tremendous pounding until he thought it could be heard all over the theater. With a terrific wrench he got up from his chair, lurched down the yard or two to the stage, and slowly walked up the steps to the promised land.

At first he couldn't take his eyes off Mlle. Adorée. She was lovely, much lovelier than he thought she would be. She was so little and graceful, and so brave. Her eyes were deep blue, like the cornflowers in the fields near home. He had never thought the cornflowers a

particularly pretty color until he looked at Mlle. Adorée's eyes. And she had such long black eyelashes, he could hardly believe they were real. Of course there was a lot of paint on her face. Aleck knew she had to have that on, but he thought she'd be even prettier on the street without it. In a way her face was hidden behind the paint.

Mlle. Adorée saw him staring at her, but she didn't seem to mind. She gave him a little smile all for himself; there couldn't be any doubt about that one. It seemed to tell him that she understood everything, that she knew how much he liked her and that she liked him, too.

A sudden command from Marcony brought Aleck back to a realization of where he was. He blinked a little and began to look around him. How bare the stage was behind where the audience could see. Not pretty at all. And those men holding ropes and switching on lights, you never dreamed they were there when you were sitting out in the theater. It was grand. Some of the people in the other acts, in various stages of disarray, were standing in the wings, watching Marcony with a bored air. Marcony asked Aleck to touch the lady's fingers and toes to see if they were real. As he grasped the little hand he felt a pressure which caused a thrill to chase down his spine, and then Marcony and the assistant picked up the saw, gathered the men about them and began their gruesome task.

Aleck stood by, petrified. He felt as though his heart had stopped beating altogether. The other men, he noted vaguely, were smiling in a sheepish sort of way. But he couldn't smile. He couldn't move a muscle of his face. As the saw cut deeper and deeper into the box, Aleck grew more and more rigid, fascinated by the sound, and the flash of the steel as it wove back and forth.

He hated Marcony for doing this thing. Way back in his head he knew it must be all right. It had to be, the law wouldn't allow it if it weren't. But that knowledge did no good when he was faced with the thing itself. Just

suppose it was dangerous! That wonderful little girl might be hurt or killed, without a chance for escape. He knew Marcony was a villain. He felt sure Mlle. Adorée hated him and was in his power. Just the way Tessie had hated Cuthbert Montmorency, the stage manager in the book. But she had been in his power and couldn't get away until the hero had saved her. Maybe he could save Mlle. Adorée.

But how? Where would he ever see her again? As he asked himself a daring thought was born in him. He would wait for her to come out after the show. She'd be with Marcony, most likely, but maybe he'd be able to get in a word with her. She had smiled at him. He had a feeling she knew he wanted to see her, so maybe she would arrange somehow to be alone.

Anyway, he could look at her again. Without her stage clothes and paint on. He could see her as she looked every day, off the stage. That would be something to remember.

After the show was out Aleck found his way to the stage entrance. He stood nervously in the dingy alley, twisting his soft hat about in futile circles, peering eagerly at each figure as it emerged from the theater.

He wondered whether she would recognize him, and what she would do. He hoped she wouldn't think he was fresh. He prayed fiercely that Marcony wouldn't be with her. But when she finally appeared in the dimly lighted alley, the huge figure of the magician was at her side. Aleck's heart gave a great leap downward, his throat felt hot and suffocated. He wanted to cry.

The pair came swinging down the alley, unaware, apparently, of the waiting man. Marcony turned to the girl, gave her a little pat on the arm and said:

"You run along, kid; I'll stick around a while and see that the stuff gets off all right."

Aleck heard the words in a daze. He could talk to her, after all. His heart resumed its normal position, although

it beat with a terrific thump and noise. The girl walked lightly on, smiling to herself, until she came abreast of Aleck. He had stepped forward at her approach, and was gripping the edges of his hat very hard. Before he had time to step back into the shadow, she was there, right next to him, so close that he could touch her. She stopped for a bare instant before him, and smiled, a shy, wavering sort of smile, but unmistakably for him. Then she walked on, out into the street, without turning around even once.

## V

BUT the smile had been enough. Trembling and hot but terrifically happy, Aleck followed. Mlle. Adorée walked on down Sixth Avenue for two or three blocks without giving any sign of noticing Aleck. As she passed one of the little second-hand clothing shops she was attracted apparently by a dress in the window, and stopped lingeringly to examine it. Aleck reached the window, stood there a moment, and as the girl showed no sign of moving, he spoke.

"Grand night, ain't it?" he said, hesitatingly. Mlle. Adorée turned from her inspection of the made-overs and smiled, revealing strong, not too small teeth.

"Yeah," she replied, "if it don't rain." Aleck grinned appreciatively. Clever, too. He sighed.

"I was at the show," he said, "and I went up on the stage. That's a great little act you got there."

They had left the show window and were walking slowly down Sixth Avenue. The girl's manner was tentative, as though she were planning to leave him at the next corner. But it was passed and she still allowed him to loiter at her side.

"Yeah," she said, enthusiastically, "we're always a riot. Why, out'n Ellenburgh, where we was last week, they're still pickin' 'em up from under the seats where we knocked 'em. You in the profession?"

A warm glow enveloped Aleck's

being at these words. He regretted that he had to answer in the negative.

"No," he said. He paused. He didn't want to spoil it by telling her exactly what he did. Not after she had mistaken him for a member of the profession.

"I uh—I'm connected with the subway," he said. That wouldn't give it away. Mlle. Adorée smiled and tossed her yellow curls.

"Guard, I suppose," she said with a laugh. Aleck was astonished. The girl was wonderful.

"How did you guess it?" he stammered feebly.

"Oh, I c'n tell by the way you look." Aleck was relieved. He hated to lie or do anything under false pretenses, and she didn't seem to mind, even though he didn't have a swell job. Well, she was just as nice as he thought she'd be.

"You . . . you're awful pretty," he said, flushing. "Even prettier off the stage than on." Mlle. Adorée laughed.

"You ain't said the half of it, dearie," she countered. "You're a fast worker, ain't you?"

"No," answered Aleck. "I been coming to the show every night this week. The first time I jest went in and I got int'rested in the act. Then I saw you and you looked like a girl in a story I once read, 'All for Name and Gold.' I was scared somethin' would happen to you when you got sawed in half. It's dangerous, ain't it?"

"Sure it's dangerous," she said, "but that don't bother me none. The ambulance is there in case anything should happen. It's a great life if you don't weaken."

"Do you hafta do it?" asked Aleck. She looked at him in amazement.

"What else could I do?" Here was an opening for him. He would tell her everything.

"You could—" but he stopped. He couldn't talk somehow. It was too wonderful, walking along here with her just as if he'd always known her. And she was so sweet and pretty. He could hardly believe he was awake. The touch

of her arm, which she had slipped through his, brought him back to realities.

"Let's go somewhere where we can talk," he suggested.

"Gee, you can talk now an' you ain't doing it." Aleck smiled apologetically.

"I guess it's looking at you that does it. When I start to say anything my throat gets all tied up. You're so pretty."

Mlle. Adorée regarded him steadfastly.

"That's some line you got, kid," she said. "Where'd you pick it up?"

"Line?" asked Aleck.

"Yeah, line. All you need is a couple gags and a partner and you'd have a great two act." Aleck looked bewildered and changed the subject.

"How'd you like to go for a little chop suey?" he asked.

Mlle. Adorée thought it was a swell idea. Slop gooley was her middle name. They found their way to a Chinese restaurant and soon were shut off from the public gaze by the little carved screens of a booth. From behind mounds of chicken almond chow mein they surveyed each other.

"I can't stay long," volunteered the girl. "I gotta catch a train. We open tomorrow in Pittstown."

Aleck heard the words in a sort of pain. Going away. Of course, what a fool he had been to forget about that. They always traveled around.

"Will you be back in New York soon?"

"Nope. We're booked solid on the western time beginnin' next month. We're workin' our way west from now on. We got thirty-two weeks a'ready and before we're through that we'll have eight more. Then we'll lay off for the summer out in L. A. Oh boy! That's some town."

Aleck was silent. He was thinking hard. Here was his great adventure, the thing he'd waited for all his life, and had come to the city to find. He had found it and already it was slipping away from him. He couldn't let it go that way. Nothing in the world was

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harder for him to do than talk but he'd have to tell her what he felt. Why was it always so hard for him? He never knew the right words. Flushing, twisting his handkerchief, he plunged in. But the things he had meant to say didn't come out. Something altogether different came to his mind.

"Say," he said, "will you do one thing for me? I want to know your name. Your front name, I mean. I ain't trying to get fresh and you don't have to tell me your whole name, but I got a special reason for wanting to know the other."

"Sure, bright eyes," said Mlle. Adorée, "my name is Tessie. But Gawd, you couldn't use that on the stage. It's too ugly."

Aleck's eyes were shining.

"I knew it," he said to himself, "it *hadda* be Tessie." Then aloud:

"It's a pretty name. Awful pretty. Like you. I never saw a girl as pretty as you. Out in the country where I come from the girls are homely. I always thought about a pretty girl with gold curls like the girl in that book I told you about." The words were released now and came almost easily. He leaned toward her across the cooling odorous mess of food, and went on:

"Then I saw you in the theater Monday night and I knew you were the one. Honest, I nearly died when he sawed through that box. I was afraid he'd hurt you."

"My Gawd!" was Mlle Adorée's comment. "Say, listen, dearie," she said, looking at the little watch on her wrist, "it's time for me to blow. I gotta meet Marcony over at Grand Central."

Aleck paid the check. With trembling fingers he wrote his name and address on a scrap of paper. His heart beat triple time as he braced himself to make his daring request.

"Tessie," he said, pressing the scrap of paper into her hand, "will you write to me? I'll wait for you until you come back to New York, but I wish you'd write to me. I don't know any girls and I don't want to. But if you'll write

to me once in a while I can stand it. It's gonna be a long time, ain't it?"

"A long time for what?" Her voice was a challenge.

"For me to wait for you." Tessie's eyes glistened.

"You said it," she echoed. "A darn long time." They walked east toward the terminal.

"You ain't answered me yet," he said eagerly, as they neared Vanderbilt Avenue. "Will you write to me?"

The blonde curls bobbed and tossed as she shook a decided head.

"Sure, sweetie, every day." And Aleck found himself standing alone. His adventure had turned the corner and vanished.

Aleck wandered slowly back to his boarding-house. He tried to remember everything that had happened, but already it was losing some of its reality. He must have been dreaming. No, she said she'd write. *Every day*. Gosh, she must like him a little bit or she wouldn't promise to do that. She was a pretty busy girl.

But how dumb he'd been! Why couldn't he ever say the things he wanted to say? There were lots of things he had wanted to tell her and ask her, but when it came right down to it he couldn't do it. But the most important thing was that she'd come back to him. She said so. She even seemed to be anxious. When he had said what a long time it would be, she had said "a darn long time." Oh gosh, she was pretty! And sweet. What a lovely wife she'd be. He knew just where they'd live. There were some little two-family houses near the Prospect Avenue station. It would be convenient for him. And nice if they had kids. He'd have to work for promotion.

He wondered when the first letter would come. This was Wednesday. Well, she'd write tomorrow. He ought to have it in the first mail on Friday. He could take it to work with him and read it between stations. That would make the route even better. He wished he'd cut off one of those yellow curls.

## VI

MARCONY was talking to a couple of young men when Tessie joined him.

"Meet the wife," he said, "great little pal. More like a friend. Cooks on a Sterno swell. These boys are on the bill with us at Pittstown, dearie. Have a good time with that guy?"

"Gawd, he was a riot," she said. "He certainly does put on a swell act. Live

an' learn. I thought I knew men, but this one was somethin' new on me. Pre-tendin' to be a subway guard and talkin' a lot of bunk about a girl with golden hair. Honest, he had me stopped. But I just kidded right back. Made believe I fell for his stuff and didn't give him a tumble. He's good, I'll hand 'im that. But you gotta get up pretty early in the morning to slip anything over on little Tessie."



## Let Me Love Bright Things!

By A. Newberry Choyce

*LET me love bright things  
Before my life is over. . .  
Moons, and shining wings  
Of bees about the clover.*

*Bathers in seas;  
Cities by night;  
Tall rainy trees;  
Yellow candle-light.*

*And long sunlit lands  
That lie anywhere;  
And one with white hands  
To comb her gleaming hair!*



**D**ISASTER comes not from asking your wife to believe too much, but from asking her to believe too often.



**P**HILOSOPHY is a matter of supporting beliefs. Religion, a matter of supporting clergymen.



**H**ELL is Heaven enjoying itself.





# The Fountain of Youth

By *L. M. Hussey*

## I

SHE had gone to the theatre alone. Her mood, in contrast with its customary gaiety, was a little melancholy. For some reason, life seemed just a trifle less zestful; she waited for the curtain to go up with downcast eyes.

The play was a popular one, and, as she had not purchased her ticket in advance, she had been forced to take a seat somewhat too close to the stage. The house was nearly filled already. In her row there was only one empty chair—the one next to her.

Presently a young man pushed in from the aisle and occupied this seat. She gave him a sideways glance as he removed his overcoat. He was well-dressed and good looking, but today, in her depressed mood, she felt no interest in his nearness.

Ordinarily she would have been pleased, would have felt a faint inner thrill at the proximity to this unknown youth, for she was romantic and responsive to the chance of delicate adventure. She knew now that he was glancing at her, appraising her profile, no doubt congratulating himself upon his luck. But she gave no sign of awareness.

After a time, since she would not meet his eyes, he turned his head, scrutinizing others in the theatre. Knowing this, she felt relieved. Today she experienced very little of her customary zest for adventure. She wanted to be quiet and alone. A curious fog of irrational disillusionment hung over her spirits.

Now the orchestra pit was filling up.

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The musicians emerged, stooping, from the little door under the stage; she watched them with an indifferent interest. They pushed by each other, seated themselves, took up their instruments, and the cacophony of tuning began.

One of the last to appear was an old man who took his stand by the bass viol. He stripped it of its felt cover and, tightening his bow, drew it across the strings, eliciting their gruff response.

She watched this old fellow idly at first, but her interest passed, gradually, into a compassionate emotion.

His hair was quite gray. His clothes were somewhat mussed, and not entirely new. His shoulders were bent a little. He wore a white moustache that, untrimmed, straggled down across his cheeks.

His fate, it seemed to her, was pathetic. He was nearly at the end of life, yet it was necessary for him to come here every evening to make cheap music on his bull-fiddle in order that he might live in a shabby room somewhere, eat in cheap restaurants, and keep himself clothed in this shoddy way.

Yet, sometime he had been young! Perhaps he had dreamed then of a high career. At least, in those early days, he has received some of the gifts that are the accompaniment of mere youth, whatever had been his hope or accomplishment: there had been women for him; some girl, no doubt, had loved him.

Now, having finished the tuning of his instrument, she found that he was looking up, out into the audience.

His glance, passing over the faces, met hers.

She saw his features brighten—and spontaneously she smiled at him.

"Perhaps it will make him feel some kindness in the world today," she thought.

## II

He had entered the orchestra pit, not with any dejection, but with his customary lack of interest. If anything, he felt a little off, for his dinner had been badly cooked, and the beer with which he had washed it down was weak and glassy.

However, he experienced no especial discontent. Life was no longer harsh to him, because he had mainly ceased to hope. He accepted the facts of his existence with a beneficent placidity.

It was only occasionally that he realized the approach of age. It did not trouble him; he wanted very little. Sometimes, thinking of other days, he remembered women whom he had known, and then, the sense of advancing years oppressed him slightly. These adventures did not come any more. It had been a long time since a woman had smiled at him.

His instrument was in tune; there was a young idiot who played beside him and rather than enter into a foolish conversation he pretended an interest

in the audience, glancing out now at the blur of faces.

Among them a single face defined itself from the others. He became aware that a young girl was looking at him.

He met her eyes for a moment without emotion. In another second the steadiness of her gaze surprised him.

It seemed improbable—but she must be actually interested in him!

Almost unconsciously he straightened his shoulders, pulled down the lapels of his coat, touched his little black necktie. Yes—that girl was interested!

A pleasing warmth tingled in his fingers. His eyes twinkled a little. No doubt she found him a romantic figure, playing there in the orchestra. The women always responded to an artist!

Well, he *was* romantic. He had been through the world in his day and knew something about the likes of women!

And now she smiled!

The conductor stepped to his desk and tapped with his baton. The old bullfiddler leaned on his instrument zestfully.

There was no question, he had been growing foolish over this business of age. He was not as old as he thought. In fact, he was still pretty young.

After the show he decided he would hurry out and look for that young girl.



AT the moment after death I may meet Satan, but he will be no stranger; all my life I have known him as Hope.



ALL men are pigs; a genius is merely a pig with wings.



# A Ballet of Opinion

By George Jean Nathan

## I

LET the moralists, when they revile the sex dramatists, not overlook the boldest, the most conspicuous, the most indefatigable, and the most dangerous of them all. I allude, obviously enough, to God.

## II

THAT great critics often contradict each other is no argument against the value and estate of criticism. Great artists also often contradict each other, yet is the fact ever used as an argument against the value and estate of art? If Goethe contradicts Schlegel, Wagner contradicts Mozart, and if Zola contradicts Sarcey, Cézanne contradicts Manet, and Ibsen contradicts Sardou. Go further. What if great critics often contradict themselves? Do not great artists often do the same? Consider the Hauptmann of "Henry of Aue" and the Hauptmann of "Rose Bernd." Or the Richard Strauss of the "Wanderer's Sturmlied" and the Richard Strauss of "Don Quixote." Or the Laurence Sterne of "Sermons" and the Laurence Sterne of the "Sentimental Journey." Or the Mark Twain that everyone recognizes and the Mark Twain of "The Mysterious Stranger" and "What Is Man?"

## III

THE fact that dramatic criticism in America is ridden with sentimentality finds fresh illustration in the current extravagant eulogies of the histrionic genius of the late Bert Williams.

Whether Williams was or was not the great actor that my colleagues claim he was, I have not the vaguest means of knowing, since he did not give any definite indication of exceptional talent during his life-time, and since table-tapping doesn't convince me. Save for his familiar, excellent poker game pantomime (which was essentially a vaudeville act), I never saw him do anything (possibly because no manager ever gave him the chance) that had anything to do with acting, whether good or bad—and I saw him do everything that he did do from the early days of Williams and Walker to the day of his death. To hear him sing a single comic song was to hear him sing a hundred; he never varied his method in the slightest; he was as monotonous as a metronome; he exercised no ingenuity or imagination; he ceaselessly rolled his eyes by way of scoring a point in exactly the same manner that Raymond Hitchcock gives a dry cough or that Sam Bernard adjusts his trousers. The hypothetical genius of Williams was a legend fostered in the sentimental critical hearts by the circumstance that he was a negro and hence, it was somehow imagined, a theatrical under-dog. Did he not travel in a separate coach when he went on the road with the white members of the "Follies"? Was he ever elected to the Lambs' Club? Had he not wistfully behaved himself—unlike Jack Johnson—and confined himself to a black wife? From all of this it was a simple step to endow him with virtues histrionic as well as ethical. If he had been a white actor, he would have been treated critically as any other white actor. But, being a negro, he was sentimentalized as

American dramatic criticism sentimentalizes, and thus confuses the artistic values of, four things out of five: as with old age—in the instance of, say, Mrs. Thomas Whiffen; as with heroic war service—in the instance of, say, Mr. Allan Pollock; as with unselfish and worthy endeavour in fields removed from the theatre—in the instance of, say, Miss Elsie Janis; as with death at an early stage in a career—in the instance of, say, Mr. Harold Chapin; and as with an alien struggling bravely with the native tongue—in the instance of, say, Mr. Jacob Ben-Ami.

## IV

THEY ridicule George M. Cohan for his cheap habit of waving the flag. They may, if they are so inclined, on the same score ridicule Euripides and Shakespeare.

## V

CENSORSHIP is birth control applied to art. It seeks to prevent artistic conception by introducing the whirling spray into æsthetics.

## VI

IF you ask me to name the three finest prose stylists that America has produced, I turn my attention from the field of professional letters and give you the names of Thomas Jefferson, Aaron Burr and Abraham Lincoln.

## VII

MUCH nonsense is written of the "ennobling influence" of great art. What precisely, for instance, is the ennobling influence of half of the greatest dramatic art from the time of Sophocles to the present day? What is the exaltation of the spirit induced by "Oedipus"? Or by "Lysistrata"? Or by the "Rudens" and "Menæchmi" of Plautus? Or by "The Tempest," "Macbeth" and "Othello"? Or by the "Polyeucte" of Corneille and the "Mithridate" of Ra-

cine? Or by the finer dramas of the Restoration? Or by the "Belisario" of Goldoni? Or by "The School for Scandal"? Or by Schiller's "The Robbers" and "Wallenstein"? Or by Ibsen's "Rosmersholm" or "Ghosts," to mention but two? Or, to come up to our own day, by Strindberg's "The Father," Hauptmann's "Colleague Crampton," "The Reconciliation" and "Gabriel Schilling's Flight," Galsworthy's "Strife," Tolstoi's "Power of Darkness," Gorki's "Night Refuge," Tchekhov's "The Seagull," and Schnitzler's "Reigen"?

## VIII

OF all the arts, painting is perhaps essentially the most feminine. It is, at bottom, sculpture in rouge, lip-stick, powder, mascaro, belladonna and henna—lying flat upon its back.

## IX

I AM customarily accused of being a destructive critic. I fear that I can't summon up sufficient ingenuity to disprove the charge. Let me therefore, and with creditable shame, make a full confession. Looking back over the eighteen years of my critical writing I find, to my eternal damnation in the eyes of my worthy constructive brethren, that I have, so to speak, worked my wicked will—among others—upon such eminent petitioners and suitors of fame as these: Charles Klein, the realistic hocus-pocus of David Belasco, Augustus Thomas, the Gertrude Hoffman version of the Russian Ballet, the drama of Hall Caine, the genius of Otis Skinner, "Bought and Paid For"—the Play of the Century, Charles Rann Kennedy, the artistic aims of the Actors' Equity Association, Mæterlinck's mysticism, the brilliant white flame of Samuel Shipman, Russ Whytal, the Corinthian soul of Percy Mackaye, "Abie's Irish Rose," the propaganda drama of Brieux, the profound art of Henri Bernstein, Sophie Tucker's vocal accomplishments, the matchless talent of Stanley Hough-

ton, the length of Mr. Henry Kolker's trousers, the wit of the Hattons, the eerie fantasy of the later J. M. Barrie, German plays whose scenes were transferred to Hawaii and which were then announced to be the work of Irish playwrights, Sydney Grundy, Cizzie Fitzgerald's wink, the æsthetic motives of the Princess Theatre during its attempt to be the American Grand Guignol, the Louis Quinze Shakespearian fairies of Granville Barker, the intellectuality of Mrs. Fiske, the remarkable genius of Edward Sheldon, the Drama League, the art of John Luther Long, Clayton Hamilton's bleeding heart, the geist of William Vaughn Moody and of Israel Zangwill, vaudeville (both American and Russian), Emmanuel Reicher's John Gabriel Borkman, the art of Butler Davenport, Mr. Louis Mann as a pundit, "Mrs. Warren's Profession," the librettos of George V. Hobart, the plays of George V. Hobart, the lyrics of George V. Hobart, Schaeffer—The Most Versatile Genius In The World, dramaturgic rules, the New Art of Owen Davis, the "religious atmosphere" of four out of every five Biblical plays, the philosophy that Sarah Bernhardt is every bit as young today as she was sixty-five years ago, the glory of Bronson Howard, Ridgley Torrence as a great dramatist of negro life and character, the art of the movies, the drama of Robert Hichens, Lou Tellegen, J. Hartley Manners' five-foot shelf, the trip to the Neighbourhood Playhouse, and Alice Delysia's *stentoppia*. . . .

I blush, and hang my head.

## X

THE average modern American play is to be appraised in the person of the actor who plays its hero. Both confuse an artificial coat of tan with intrinsic robustness and vigour.

## XI

ARTHUR HOPKINS rejected Molnar's "Liliom" on the ground that it contained a scene depicting Heaven as a

court-room, which, he argued, would offend many persons. Yet five years ago Mr. Hopkins produced the Macphersons' "The Happy Ending" which contained a scene depicting Heaven as a platform covered with green cheesecloth and peopled largely by members of the Lambs' Club.

## XII

THERE can be no wit where there is not at least a measure of disillusion.

## XIII

THE unmistakable trend of the theatre as an institution is away from drama and toward comedy. This is inevitable. The cumulative sophistication of theatre audiences must soon or late delete of effective drama many of the hitherto most valid dramatic episodes and situations. The greatest dramatist living today could not for a moment make a modern audience believe—as Sardou made an audience of the '80's believe—that the villain who was chasing the heroine around the table would actually seduce her right out on the open stage. Nine-tenths of the essential and most pulse-stirring situations of drama have already worn out their power of suspense and excitation. The audience of today knows in advance, and absolutely, that the hero is not going to be killed by the villain, that the heroine is going to marry no one other than the hero, and that the United States Marines are certain to arrive on the scene before the bomb goes off. The amiable surprises of comedy alone remain as emotional apéritifs. Drama, in the commonly accepted meaning—which is to say melodramatic drama as opposed to psychological and problem drama—is doomed out of its own endless reiterations and out of the necessary limits of stage realism. For all the quarter-century talk of realism, the only actual realism permitted the drama has been that which has been confined, by public taste, decorum and faint stomach, to the wings. The true realism of the drama is for the most part found, upon

reflection, to have transpired off-stage and to have been reflected by and upon the prudently restrained characters immediately before the audience's vision. From Ibsen to Hauptmann, from Eugene Walter to Cecil Raleigh, the story is largely the same. The characters on the stage merely speak realistically of a realism of action that is for the most part made to play its course back of the scenes.

Crane Wilbur's melodrama, "The Monster," is defeated by the sophistication of its audience. Its first and second acts predict horrors that its audience knows perfectly well can never come off. The tale is of a maniac who believes himself to be a great surgeon and who lures to his remote abattoir prospective laboratory specimens. Mr. Wilton Lackaye is the Svengali without whiskers who in the last act flashes a scalpel and informs the audience that he is about to cut up and murder the bad actress who plays the role of the heroine, and then disappoints it by not doing so.

## XIV

MR. ACHMED ABDULLAH tells me that he has written a play on the harem containing only six characters. I tell him in turn that that isn't a harem, but merely a bachelor apartment.

## XV

MEN go to the theatre to look. Women, to listen.

## XVI

1. NOT to go to the theatre is like making one's toilet without a mirror.

2. If a second or third rate play is performed by second or third rate actors, no one can wonder if it is utterly ineffective.

3. The real theatrical talent of the Germans was Kotzebue. . . . The second dramatic talent was Schiller.

4. The word "tragedy" is derived from the Greek word which means goat and the Greek word which means song.

Tragedy is then, as it were, a goatish song—that is, fowl like a goat.

5. The reason is perspicuous why no French plays, when translated, have succeeded or ever can succeed on the English stage.

6. Good music is a remedy against tediousness.

Cheap platitudes or—worse still—sheer ignorance, you chuckle. I am a complete and utter ass, you say. But hold a moment, and rest your blame. The first paragraph is by Schopenhauer. The second is by Goethe. The third is by Nietzsche. The fourth is by Dante. The fifth is by Dryden. And the sixth is the profound philosophy of Napoleon Bonaparte.

## XVII

HAS anyone, in novel, short story, play or painting, ever failed completely who has taken the sea for his subject? It is the one theme that appears to resist not even the second-rate artist.

## XVIII

IT is my firm conviction, after due and protracted appraisal of all the rest of them, that the average young American actress knows her job better than any of her European rivals, save alone the Austro-Hungarian. The American stage has two talented young women for every one that the French stage has, three for every one in England, and at least a half dozen for every one in Germany. This holds true not only of the dramatic stage, but also of the musical comedy. Looking at the Italian stage in five different years, I have seen only two young women apparently under twenty-five who were in any way the equal of any one of three or four young women of the same age that our stage reveals almost every season. With the young men, however, it is a different, and ineffably more grievous, story.

## XIX

I PLUCK the following words, phrases and sentences from a recent critique of

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the "Follies" by the estimable Mons. Percy Hammond, Diderot to the *Tribune*:

1. facetiousness.
2. the literature of antice entertainment.
3. the juniper jokes of Stephen Leacock.
4. the invigorating huzzas of so whiplash a wit.
5. the motley engines of our dubious risibilities.
6. the lethal post term.
7. audiences which laugh, as Bastio of Thebes used to put it, immoderately at Miss Gilda Gray's gymnosophy and at the cadaverous capers of Gallagher and Shean, observe a recess from their applause and are silent.
8. the better and finer things are not always those which evoke from audiences an eccentric babbling.
9. Mr. Lardner's turplenade.
10. Jerome Kern or any other piangelist.

I herewith offer a grand prize of \$25,000 in gold and a round-trip ticket to Bayonne, New Jersey, to any person who can tell me what these words, phrases and sentences mean. No one, including Mr. Hammond, is barred from the contest.

## XX

THE predestined heart and nature of the artist, like those of every other man, work obstinately—for all his intense deliberation—in a great circle. They come back eventually to the ingrafted point at which they started; he cannot, however much he tries to, change them, make them other than generically they are, set them in other directions. A Richard Strauss, for all his impudent and fiery digressions, thus finds that he works in a large circle from a "Serenade" to a "Rosenkavalier," a Flaubert from an "A Bord de la Cange" to his reminiscences of Brittany, a Strindberg from a "Meister Olof" to an "Abu Casem's Slippers" and a "Christmas," a Turgenev from his first poems to "Senilia," his last, a Veronese—after a brave excursion into irony bordering upon blasphemy, as in "The Last Supper"—back to the sentimental attitude toward theology as illustrated in his "Coronation of the Virgin," a Pinero from the syrups of a "Daisy's Escape," a "By-

gones" and a "Sweet Lavender" to an "Enchanted Cottage."

## XXI

THERE may be a hundred greater singers in the world, but there is none one-hundredth so beautiful as the remarkable Austro-Hungarian eye-tonic named Papp Jolán.

## XXII

ACTORS and boarding-school misses keep scrap-books.

## XXIII

ANATOLE FRANCE speaks, in the same breath, with the candour of the Latin and the cunning of the Greek.

## XXIV

THE dirt of the bedroom farce . . . the sob stuff of the rural play . . . the tawdry melodrama of the 10-20-30 thriller . . . the sex alarums of the Broadway yokel-yanker . . . the bloody sensationalism of the Grand Guignol shocker . . . the nudity of the "Follies" . . . the extravagant murder and sudden death of the crook play . . . the dubious symbolism of the box-office neo-Maeterlincks . . . the bawdry of a Fourteenth Street burlesque show . . . the stretching of the long arm of coincidence as not even Theodore Kremer ever stretched it . . . the injection of propaganda gallery speeches . . . the banal eternal triangle hokum . . . In short, the greatest and most beautiful drama ever written. In short, the Bible.

## XXV

WHATEVER may be the opinion of Mr. David Belasco's proficiency in producing plays, there can be no doubt whatsoever that he knows more about producing first night audiences than any other American manager. Mr. Belasco's first night audience is a dramatic masterpiece.

Trained by the hand of a master and created in his image, its histrionic genius, its emotional equipment and its dramatic deportment are such as to evoke the unstinted admiration and praise of the more discerning critic. The Belasco first night audience is by all odds the best actor in the American theatre. No other actor can compare with it in the matter of impeccable technique. It "gets over" as no other actor on our stage is able to.

Mr. Belasco's latest production was the first night audience that opened the Lyceum Theatre early last month. I cannot commend it in sufficiently high terms. The direction was perfect, and the performance not less so. At every stage of the evening it showed clearly the careful Belasco tuition. Not a tear, not a laugh, not a hand-clap that was misplaced. It should have been elected to the Players' Club forthwith. As a sort of side-show to the audience, Mr. Belasco produced a little comedy by Hubert Osborne called "Shore Leave." A mild but pleasant little thing, nicely acted by Miss Starr and Mr. James Rennie, it did not quite succeed in distracting attention from the main event of the evening. It is possible that Mr. Belasco, his time too greatly occupied with the production of the audience, somewhat neglected this secondary exhibition. No matter. Work well done deserves a full credit, and Mr. Belasco's audience on this occasion was the best show of the season.

## XXVI

"MANHATTAN," by the Messrs. Hull and Osmun, is a tenth-rate sentimental comedy crammed to the nozzle with tacky hokum. There is in it, from beginning to end, not a trace of distinction. One never ceases to marvel at the processes of mind, taste and financial calculation whereby a producer arrives at the selection of such a manuscript. Good plays, true enough, are not—as such producers say—easy to find; but plays twenty times better than "Manhattan," and doubtless twenty times bet-

ter box-office gambles, are close at hand. A few examples: Sacha Guitry's "La Clef," "La Pélerine Ecossoise," "La Jalousie," "Je T'Aime," and "Nono" (the royalties on these—with the exception of the fourth named—are perhaps not so prohibitive as in the instance of his more recent plays); F. Scott Fitzgerald's "Gabriel's Trombone," Lilith Benda's "Judy," Lengyel's "Sancho Panza's Kingdom," the de Gorsse and de Marsan farce called "La Coup de Jarnac," Donnay's "The Man Hunt"—for all its resemblance to W. S. Maugham's comedy of some years ago, "Smith"—, the Japanese tragedy "Ki-Mu-Sume" acted in London a number of seasons ago by Madame Hanako—this would be a welcome novelty—, Georg Kaiser's "Gas," Max Adelbert's comedy "The Divorce Trip," or any one of the three or four dozen locally unproduced American and foreign plays that I mentioned five or six months back in a not particularly interesting article called "A Correspondence Course in Theatrical Business."

## XXVII

MR. EDWARD LOCKE'S "The Woman Who Laughed" is about a wife who learns that her husband is carrying on with her step-sister, drugs the pair, ties them up on a sofa and then spends the rest of the evening at stage right alternately hurling sardonic remarks at them and getting lumpy in the throat over the fact that her young babe lies under a little green mound in the cemetery on the hill. Such *opera*, I fear, are not for Giorgio. Heartless one that he is, they leave the fellow cold. I suppose that were he more human he would blow his nose and bawl lustily over the unfortunate heroine's plight, but it seems that the best he can manage—for all his evident good-will—is the former.

There are but three characters in the play. To write a sound and interesting play with but three characters requires a measure of genius. Mr. Locke, unhappily, is not—strictly speaking—gifted with genius. And the best that



he is therefore able to contrive is a more or less conventional thing of the showshop with the conventional cast of nine persons reduced to three by the laborious excision of the conventional butler, maid, family solicitor, neighbour and his epigrammatic wife, and Uncle Farquhar from South Africa. Thus, Mr. Locke's "The Woman Who Laughed" is less an authentic play of three characters than a stereotyped piece of the showhouse with a prudently reduced salary list. Miss Martha Hedman plays the wife as if the latter were the leading actress in a Schenectady stock company. Miss Gilda Leary is better in the role of the Lorelei, though she employs the hard pedal as assiduously as Will Vodery. Mr. William H. Powell, a capable actor, gives the best performance of the evening in the only role of the three that even remotely touches life.

## XXVIII

"LIGHTS OUT" is a play by Mr. Paul Dickey and Mr. Mann Page. I have been sitting here for forty minutes trying to think of something to say about "Lights Out," a play by Mr. Paul Dickey and Mr. Mann Page, but I can think of absolutely nothing. True enough, I might write down the plot, or go into a learned treatise on the ability or lack of ability shown by the actors, or follow my usual irritating practise of writing an essay that has utterly nothing

to do with the play, the one way or another. But I can find in this "Lights Out" not even inspiration for any of these dodges. In the first place, the plot of "Lights Out" didn't interest me sufficiently to remember enough of it to transcribe the thing coherently. In the second place, I am generally interested even less in actors, however talented, who waste their ability upon tawdry plays. And in the third place, you have had enough of my digressions in the last few months to warrant a surcease.

Plays like "Lights Out"—after years of theatregoing—are pretty hard upon a reviewer. After writing of them for almost two decades and having exhausted every conceivable thing that may possibly be said of them, there remains nothing for him to do but arbitrarily over-praise the actor who appears for only a moment in the second act, denounce the French accent of the actress who has the role of the vampire, and professorially call stern attention to the fact that nitroglycerine does not act precisely as the crook master-mind says it does. This is the way the gentlemen of the press invariably handle such plays. This is the way they have handled this "Lights Out." This, furthermore, is the only way that I myself can think of handling it, were I to handle it at all. As I have said, however, after forty minutes of profound meditation, I can't even think of this way.



# Portrait of an American Citizen

By H. L. Mencken

## I

THE theory lately held in Greenwich Village that the merit and success of "Main Street" constituted a sort of double-headed accident, probably to be ascribed to a case of mistaken identity on the part of God—theory blows up with a frightful roar toward the middle of "Babbitt" (*Harcourt*). The plain truth is, indeed, that "Babbitt" is at least twice as good a novel as "Main Street" was—that it avoids all the more obvious faults of that celebrated work, and shows a number of virtues that are quite new. It is better designed than "Main Street"; the action is more logical and coherent; there is more imagination in it and less bald journalism; above all, there is a better grip upon the characters. If Carol Kennicott, at one leap, became as real a figure to most literate Americans as Jane Addams or Nan Patterson; then George F. Babbitt should become as real as Jack Dempsey or Charlie Schwab. The fellow simply drips with human juices. Every one of his joints is movable in all directions. Real freckles are upon his neck and real sweat stands out upon his forehead. I have personally known him since my earliest days as a newspaper reporter, back in the last century. I have heard him make such speeches as Cicero never dreamed of at banquets of the Chamber of Commerce. I have seen him marching in parades. I have observed him advancing upon his Presbyterian tabernacle of a Sunday morning, his somewhat stoutish lady upon his arm. I have watched and heard him crank his Buick. I have noted the effect of alcohol upon him, both before and after Prohibition. And I have seen him,

when some convention of Good Fellows was in town, at his innocent sports in the parlors of brothels, grandly ordering wine at \$10 a round and bidding the professor play "White Wings."

To me his saga, as Sinclair Lewis has set it down, is fiction only by a sort of courtesy. All the usual fittings of the prose fable seem to be absent. There is no plot whatever, and very little of the hocus-pocus commonly called development of character. Babbitt simply grows two years older as the tale unfolds; otherwise he doesn't change at all—any more than you or I have changed since 1920. Every customary device of the novelist is absent. When Babbitt, revolting against the irksome happiness of his home, takes to a series of low affairs with manicure girls, grass-widows and ladies even more complaisant, nothing overt and melodramatic happens to him. He never meets his young son Teddy in a dubious cabaret; his wife never discovers incriminating correspondence in his pockets; no one tries to blackmail him; he is never present when a joint is raided. The worst punishment that falls upon him is that his old friends at the Athletic Club—cheats exactly like himself—gossip about him a bit. Even so, that gossip goes no further; Mrs. Babbitt does not hear it. When she accuses him of adultery, it is simply the formal accusation of a loving wife: she herself has absolutely no belief in it. Moreover, it does not cause Babbitt to break down, confess and promise to sin no more. Instead, he lies like a major-general, denounces his wife for her evil imagination, and returns forthwith to his carnalities. If, in the end, he abandons them, it is not because they

torture his conscience, but because they seem likely to hurt his business. This prospect gives him pause, and the pause saves him. He is, beside, growing old. He is 48, and more than a little bald. A night out leaves his tongue coated in the morning. As the curtain falls upon him he is back upon the track of rectitude—a sound business man, a faithful Booster, an assiduous Elk, a trustworthy Presbyterian, a good husband, a loving father, a successful and unchallenged fraud.

Let me confess at once that this story has given me vast delight. I know the Babbitt type, I believe, as well as most; for twenty years I have devoted myself to the exploration of its peculiarities. Lewis depicts it with complete and absolute fidelity. There is irony in the picture; irony that is unflinching and unflinching, but nowhere is there any important departure from the essential truth. Babbitt has a great clownishness in him, but he never becomes a mere clown. In the midst of his most extravagant imbecilities he keeps both feet upon the ground. One not only sees him brilliantly; one also understands him; he is made plausible and natural. As an old professor of Babbitt I welcome him as an almost perfect specimen—a genuine museum piece. Every American city swarms with his brothers. They run things in the Republic, East, West, North, South. They are the originators and propagators of the national delusions—all, that is, save those which spring from the farms. They are the palladiums of 100% Americanism; the apostles of the Harding politics; the guardians of the Only True Christianity. They constitute the Chambers of Commerce, the Rotary Clubs, the Kiwanis Clubs, the Watch and Ward Societies, the Men and Religion Forward Movements, the Y. M. C. A. directorates, the Good Citizen Leagues. They are the advertisers who determine what is to go into the American newspapers and what is to stay out. They are the Leading Citizens, the speakers at banquets, the profiteers, the corruptors of politics, the supporters of evangelical

Christianity, the peers of the realm. Babbitt is their archetype. He is no worse than most, and no better; he is the average American of the ruling minority in this hundred and forty-sixth year of the Republic. He is America incarnate, exuberant and exquisite. Study him well and you will know better what is the matter with the land we live in than you would know after plowing through a thousand such volumes as Walter Lippmann's "Public Opinion." What Lippmann tried to do as a professor, laboriously and without imagination, Lewis has here done as an artist with a few vivid strokes. It is a very fine piece of work indeed.

Nor is all its merit in the central figure. It is not Babbitt that shines forth most gaudily, but the whole complex of Babbitt, Babbittism, Babbittism. In brief, Babbitt is seen as no more than a single member of the society he lives in—a matter far more difficult to handle, obviously, than any mere character sketch. His every act is related to the phenomena of that society. It is not what he feels and aspires to that moves him primarily; it is what the folks about him will think of him. His politics is communal politics, mob politics, herd politics; his religion is a public rite wholly without subjective significance; his relations to his wife and his children are formalized and standardized; even his debaucheries are the orthodox debaucheries of a sound business man. The salient thing about him, in truth, is his complete lack of originality—and that is precisely the salient mark of every American of his class. What he feels and thinks is what it is currently proper to feel and think. Only once, during the two years that we have him under view, does he venture upon an idea that is even remotely original—and that time the heresy almost ruins him. The lesson, you may be sure, is not lost upon him. If he lives, he will not offend again. No thought will ever get a lodgment in his mind, even in the wildest deliriums following bootleg gin, that will offer offense to the pruderies of Vergil

Gunch, president of the Boosters' Club, or to those of old Mr. Eathorne, president of the First State Bank, or to those of the Rev. Dr. John Jennison Drew, pastor of the Chatham Road Presbyterian Church, or to those of Prof. Pumphrey, head of the Zenith Business College, or even to those of Miss McGoun, the virtuous stenographer. He has been rolled through the mill. He emerges the very model and pattern of a forward-looking, right-thinking Americano.

As I say, this "Babbitt" gives me great delight. It is shrewdly devised; it is adeptly managed; it is well written. The details, as in "Main Street," are extraordinarily vivid — the speech of Babbitt before the Zenith Real Estate Board, the meeting to consider ways and means of bulging the Chatham Road Sunday-school, the annual convention of the real-estate men, Babbitt's amour with the manicure-girl, the episode of Sir Gerald Doak, the warning visit when Babbitt is suspected of Liberalism, the New Thought meeting, the elopement of young Theodore Roosevelt Babbitt and Eunice Littlefield at the end. In all these scenes there is more than mere humor; there is searching truth. They reveal something; they mean something. I know of no American novel that more accurately presents the real America. It is a social document of a high order.

## II

MISS WILLA CATHER'S "One of Ours" (*Knopf*) divides itself very neatly into two halves, one of which deserves to rank almost with "My Antonia" and the other of which drops precipitately to the level of a serial in the *Ladies' Home Journal*. It is the first half that is the good one. Here Miss Cather sets herself a scene that she knows most intimately and addresses herself to the interpretation of characters that have both her sympathy and her understanding. The scene is the prairie-land of Nebraska; the characters are the emerging peasants of that

region—no longer the pathetic clods that their fathers were, and yet but half rescued from mud, loneliness and Methodist demonology. Her protagonist is one who has gone a bit further along the upward path than most of the folks about him — young Claude Wheeler, son of old Nat, the land-hog. Claude's mother was a school-teacher, and if the dour religion of the steppes had not paralyzed her faculties in youth, might have developed into a primeval Carol Kennicott. As it is, she can only hand on the somewhat smudgy torch to Claude himself—and it is his effort to find a way through the gloom by its light that makes the story. Defeat and disaster are inevitable. The folks of Frankfort are not stupid, but beyond a certain point their imaginations will not go. Claude, fired by a year at the State University, tries to pass that point, and finds all that he knows of human society in a conspiracy against him—his father, his brothers, the girl he falls in love with, even his poor old mother. He yields bit by bit. His father fastens him relentlessly to the soil; his wife binds him in the chains of Christian Endeavor; his mother can only look on and sigh for she knows not what.

Then comes the war, and deliverance. The hinds of that remote farmland are easy victims of the prevailing propaganda. They see every event of the first two years of the struggle in the terms set by the Associated Press and the *Saturday Evening Post*. Comes 1917, and they begin flocking to the recruiting-offices, or falling cheerfully upon the patriotic business of badgering their German neighbors. Claude is one of the first to volunteer, and presently he finds himself on the way to France. Months of hope and squalor in the mud, and his regiment goes forward. A brush or two, and he is a veteran. Then, one morning, a German bullet fetches him in the heart. . . . He has found the solution to the riddle of his life in this soldier's death. A strange fish out at Frankfort, Neb., his world misunderstanding and by his world misunderstanding, he has come to his heroic destiny

in this far-flung trench. It was the brilliant end, no doubt, of many another such groping and uncomfortable man. War is the enemy of the fat and happy, but it is kind to the lonesome. It brings them into kinship with their kind, it fills them with a sense of high usefulness—and it obliterates the benign delusion at last in a swift, humane and workman-like manner.

What spoils the story is simply the fact that a year or so ago a young soldier named John Dos Passos printed a novel called "Three Soldiers." Until "Three Soldiers" is forgotten and fancy achieves its inevitable victory over fact, no war story can be written in the United States without challenging comparison with it—and no story that is less meticulously true will stand up to it. At one blast it disposed of oceans of romance and blather. It changed the whole tone of American opinion about the war; it even changed the recollections of actual veterans of the war. They saw, no doubt, substantially what Dos Passos saw, but it took his bold realism to disentangle their recollection from the prevailing buncombe and sentimentality. Unluckily for Miss Cather, she seems to have read "Three Soldiers" inattentively, if at all. The war she depicts has its thrills and even its touches of plausibility, but at bottom it is fought out, not in France, but on a Hollywood movie-lot. Its American soldiers are idealists engaged upon a crusade to put down sin; its Germans are imbeciles who charge machine-guns six-deep, in the manner of the war dispatches of the New York *Tribune*. There is a lyrical nonsensicality in it that often grows half pathetic; it is precious near the war of the standard model of lady novelist.

Which Miss Cather surely is not. When she walks ground that she knows, her footstep is infinitely light and sure. Nothing could exceed the skill with which she washes in that lush and yet desolate Nebraska landscape—the fat farms with their wood-lots of cottonwood, the villages with their grain-elevators and church-spires, the long,

burning lines of straight railroad track. Nor is there any other American novelist who better comprehends the soul of the American farmer-folk—their slow, dogged battle with the soil that once threatened to make mere animals of them, their slavery to the forms and superstitions of a barbaric theology, their heroic struggle to educate and emancipate their children, their shy reaching out for beauty. To this profound knowledge Miss Cather adds a very great technical expertness. She knows how to manage a situation, how to present a character, how to get poetry into the commonplace. I give you an example from "One of Us." In one chapter Claude visits a German family named Erlich, and one of the other guests is a remote cousin of the house, a celebrated opera-singer. She is there but a day or two and we see her for but a few moments, but when she passes on she remains almost as vivid as Claude himself. It is excellent writing, and there is a lot more of it in the first half of the book. But in the second half good writing is not sufficient to conceal the underlying unreality. It is a picture of the war, both as idea and as spectacle, that belongs to Coningsby Dawson and 1915, not to John Dos Passos and 1922.

Perhaps the war novel is intrinsically impossible in America, at least for the present. The best one could say of a good one was that it was as true as "Three Soldiers." The fact is that the genuinely typical American story of the war would probably not deal with the fighting at all, but with the astounding and unparalleled phenomena that accompanied and supported that fighting at home. After all, very few Americans actually saw any slaughter in the grand manner. By the time the main army got into action the Germans were already retiring; moreover, they were too exhausted to offer much resistance, even to rear-guard attacks. Perhaps this fact explains the tin-soldier bombast and poltroonery of the American Legion; it is run, not by soldiers who fought and endured in a real war, but

by men whose actual service in the field was very brief and not at all arduous. There were probably chaplains and horse-doctors in the German, French and English armies who saw far more hard fighting than the average of them. Moreover, even these men constituted but a small percentage of the total American population. Among the Germans and the French, probably one adult male out of two was under rifle, machine-gun and shell fire during the war; among Americans not one in twenty had that experience. But practically every American, male and female, had some hand, either as actor or as victim, in the grotesque and inordinate monkey-shines that went on at home—the loan drives, the cadging for the Y. M. C. A. and the Red Cross, the looting of enemy nationals, the spy-hunt, all the other patriotic whoop-las of the period. In that period there is abundant material for a penetrating and ironical novel. It would be amusing as literature and valuable as history, and it would let some needed lights into the dark places of the American character. No other participating nation was so safe from all peril in the war, and yet none other was so horribly scared or so shameless about revealing it.

### III

"The Outline of Science," edited by J. Arthur Thomson (*Putnam*), of which two volumes have appeared so far, starts out very competently with a clear and accurate description of the constitution of the visible universe, but before the end of the second volume it has eased itself down to the level of a popular natural history, with rather better pictures than most. All of these pictures are well printed, and some of them are valuable, but there are others that seem to have been put in merely to make a show. A worse defect is the excessive overaccentuation of English contributions to the sciences discussed. The work is English-made, and so it would not be unnatural for it to give

these contributions a certain stress, but here the thing is sometimes carried to extravagant lengths — for example, when a quarter of a page (alongside Laplace!) is given over to a portrait of Prof. Eddington, of Cambridge, "the most famous of the English disciples of Einstein," and no space is found for a portrait of Einstein himself; again, when the chapter on the body machine lays heavy stress upon the work (undoubtedly good) of such Englishmen as Sir Arthur Keith, Prof. E. H. Starling and Prof. W. M. Bayliss (beside mentioning such men as Dearborn and Saleeby), and entirely omits the name of Karl Ludwig. This insularity runs through the two volumes; the work is very thoroughly English, which should please American lickspittles. A number of mechanical blunders deface it, despite the generally good printing. The bibliography on pages 180-181 of Vol. I is obviously misplaced. In the legend under an engraving facing page 171 there are reference letters, but I can't find them on the picture. The name of Prof. Dr. Roentgen is everywhere spelled Rontgen. There are many typographical errors. But all these blemishes do not dispose of a plain fact: that the work promises to be the best thing of its sort in English. Prof. Thomson, the editor, is an excellent zoologist, and he has apparently associated with himself a number of men of competence in other fields. It is too bad that their names are not given. The authors of the opening chapters—on the universe and its mechanism and the history of life on the earth—have done so good a job that they deserve to be known.

Nevertheless, it seems to me that they dispose in too cavalier a manner of the notion (so often revived in the yellow Sunday newspapers) that there may be life on planets other than the earth, and even on certain stars. Uranus and Neptune, they say, are too hot; Mercury is too hot on one side and too cold on the other (what of the regions where the two climates meet?); Venus suffers from the same defect; Mars

lacks air and water; Jupiter is covered with a cloud of steam; so is Saturn; as for the moon, it has no air. But all these objections simply beg the question, for the most they prove (and in the case of Mars and Venus there is doubt even here) is that the planets of the solar system cannot support the sort of life that the earth supports—to wit, life based upon unstable compounds of carbon, hydrogen, oxygen and nitrogen. Is there any reason for believing that no other sort of life is possible? If so, then I have never heard of it. To me, at least, with my facile fancy, it is quite easy to imagine living forms composed, not of carbon, hydrogen, oxygen and nitrogen, but of platinum, tantalum, rhodium and tungsten, none of which melts at less than 3,000 degrees Fahrenheit. I go even further: I can imagine living beings whose bodies are not solid, but liquid—as, in fact, ours are, all save a small part. Or even gaseous. If the Lord God Almighty, by combining carbon and the three gases, can make an Ambassador at the Court of St. James, I see absolutely no reason why he cannot make a monad of helium and fluorine. Here I, too, make a gratuitous supposition: I speak of a monad, *i.e.*, of a definite cell. But why should life be the exclusive function of cells? Isn't it possible to imagine living beings without definite form? The whole interstellar space, in fact, may be full of them, and their cavortings may be the cause of some of the phenomena observed by Prof. Dr. Einstein. There may be sun-worms that flourish as contentedly in the terrific temperature of the sun as a *Bierfisch* flourishes in a keg of Löwenbräu. There may be supermen on Neptune and Uranus with skulls of fire-brick and bowels of asbestos. It is neither probable or improbable: we simply do not know. But it is certainly not impossible.

Even without abandoning the carbon concept of living matter we may easily conceive of life on Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn, to say nothing of the moon. If Jupiter

and Saturn are surrounded by clouds of visible steam, then they cannot be quite as hot as certain astronomers assume, for visible steam is steam that is hovering about a temperature of 212 degrees Fahrenheit: above that it becomes as transparent as air. There are plenty of low organisms, even on the earth, that are able to survive a bath of live steam for a considerable time; on Jupiter and Saturn they may be able to survive it long enough to grow up, love, marry, beget and decay. As for the absence of air and water on Mars and the moon, it is a deficiency of very small importance. If the Martians need hydrogen and oxygen, as we do, they may get both out of the solid crust of their planet—as we'd probably try to do if all the rivers ran dry and the air began to grow too thin for us. Many low organisms seem to exist without free oxygen, and there are probably some that get along with little, if any, hydrogen. The extreme cold of some of the planets—running down, perhaps, to absolute zero, or minus 273 degrees Centigrade—offers an obstacle of even less importance. It is very probable that there exist on earth today a number of low forms of life that could survive that temperature: a Scotsman could do it if whiskey did not freeze at minus 130. Thus I incline to suspect that all the planets swarm with life, just as the earth does, and that it is just as useless and obscene as it is here. The theory that the earth is improved by its fauna—to such a degree, indeed, that it is the special care and concern of Divinity—is one that I find myself unable to subscribe to. The most charming spots on earth, in fact, are precisely those in which living creatures, whether insects or men, are rarest.

One of the most interesting chapters in "The Outline of Science" discusses the structure of the atom, and here the stress that is laid upon the work of Englishmen is not misplaced, for the English plainly lead the world in physics. What goes on in the atom—the whirling of electrons around the pro-

ton—is extremely suggestive of what goes on in our solar system. The planets, in truth, act very much like electrons, and the whole solar system plays a part in the universe not unlike that of an atom in a molecule. This resemblance was noted 15 years ago by an Irish physicist with a French name, Prof. Dr. E. E. Fournier d'Albe, and he discussed it at length in a book called "Two New Worlds"—a volume dedicated "to the glory of God and the honor of Ireland." It is rather curious that this work is so seldom recalled. Prof. Dr. Fournier d'Albe, Gael-like, did not content himself with the statement of what he believed to be demonstrable facts: he went on to point out that if the universe that we know is simply an overgrown molecule (or maybe mere atom), then it may be no more than an ultra-microscopic part of an infinite vaster object which, in its turn, is an atom in a yet vaster one, and so on *ad infinitum*. Contrariwise, the electrons which compose matter as we know it may each be small universes, and the electrons constituting those small universes may be yet smaller universes. In brief, Dr. d'Albe sought to show that our view of all such things is a mere function of our own size. An electron seems extremely small to us simply because we are enormously larger than it is, and a solar system seems extremely large for the opposite reason. But there is no reason why space should not be divided and subdivided infinitely. That whole universes exist in the electron is perfectly conceivable. However, what is

conceivable is not necessarily what is decorous. For all I know, I may be wandering here into speculations that are lewd, heathenish and against God. If so, I apologize. If, even by inadvertence, I have said anything in violation of Holy Writ, then I most humbly recant and promise to sin no more.

## IV

*Brief Notices*

THE COLLEGE STANDARD DICTIONARY, edited by Frank H. Vizetelly (*Funk*)—A hundred and forty thousand words in 1309 pages, including proper names. I note, among latter-day American literati, Gertrude Atherton and James Whitcomb Riley, but cannot find Frank Norris or Stephen Crane. Nevertheless, it is a good dictionary.

LITTLE ADVENTURES IN NEWSPAPERDOM, by Fred W. Allsop (*Arkansas Writer Co.*)—Reminiscences, in bad English, of the manager of the *Arkansas Gazette*, the leading paper of those remote parts. Some curious lights upon newspaper practise in the Southwest, and incidentally upon the general state of civilization down there.

MADAME DE STAËL, by Andrew C. P. Haggard (*Doran*)—The usual machine-made tome. A dull rehashing of old stuff.

THE CATHOLIC SPIRIT IN MODERN ENGLISH LITERATURE, by George N. Shuster (*Macmillan*)—A well-written but extremely unconvincing effort to credit the revival of humanism in English letters to Catholic influence. The truth is that a few writers, nearly all converts, have far more profoundly influenced Catholicism in England than Catholicism has influenced literature. In the United States there is no influence in either direction. The Catholic Church here is inert æsthetically. In proportion to its numbers it has produced almost as few writers as the Church of Latter-Day Saints. The causes of this sterility I hope to go into on some future day.





XUM